

# BULGARIA

## TOURIST

## GUIDE





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*The information published in this guide is to assist your tour of Bulgaria. Although it has been carefully checked, the publisher does not feel responsible for any subsequent changes.*



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# **BULGARIA** *in VIDEOS*

...Come to know Bulgaria, a country of numerous faces, come to meet her traditions, folklore, ancient handcrafts and unforgettable scenery...

**WITH**  
**THE COLLECTION**



*A Video story ...*

# INTRODUCTION

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An ancient legend tells that when God started assigning each people its land, all people turned up, except for the Bulgarians, who were busy working in the fields until dark. God appreciated their industriousness and allotted them the only piece of land left which formed a part of paradise and a horn of plenty right in the heart of the Balkan peninsula named thereafter **Bulgaria**.

It is situated at the crossroads of European and Asian ambitions and the major routes passed through it of the world main migrations. Seven civilizations have been inherited in these lands: those of the Thracians, Slavs, Proto-Bulgarians, Byzantines, Romans, Turks and Bulgarians and each one of them has left deep imprints in Bulgarian history.

Despite being one of the smallest countries in Europe (110 911 sq. km) Bulgaria reveals an impressive variety of landscape, natural relief and tourist sites easy to access.

Many people call the Varna part of the Black Sea coast a Bulgarian Riviera or even a Bulgarian Florida. In their beauty and grandeur Rila and Pirin are likened to the Alps. The Madara rocks are often called the Bulgarian Troya. No true comparisons can, however, be drawn to characterise either the wide beaches or the remotest virgin nooks, or the precious archaeological findings dating three thousand years back since Bulgaria bears an air of originality and uniqueness.

And the traveller is given the unique chance to explore this variety and richness that makes Bulgaria stand out from the rest of the Balkan countries.



As to the Bulgarian people, they are natural, tolerant, enduring and indusrious. The Bulgarians are famous for their hospitality and good nature. They will never refuse to help a stranger even if they shake their head disapprovingly. For, **remember** that the Bulgarian sign for your “**No**” means “**Yes**”.

Bulgaria's fertile lands give juicy fruits and rich harvest which are welcome to the European markets. The Rose Valley with its soft and warm coulours has fascinated many artists. Bulgaria - the country of Dionysus and Orpheus, the land of sun and joy, crops and wine - provides serenity and comfort for its visitors and relieves them from everyday strain and fatigue.

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## HISTORY

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### *Origin*

Excavations in Bulgarian lands have unearthed plenty traces of the Middle Palaeolith ( between 100 000 and 40 000 years B.C.). The most interesting indications were revealed in Cave Devetak near Lovetch as well as in Cave Bacho Kiro near the Dryanovo Monastery.

The first settlers in the lands included in today's Bulgarian territory who were reported by ancient historians were the *Thracians*. Their population was enormous and it was divided in tribes, sometimes hostile to one another. Among these tribes the Serbs occupied the south-western parts, the Odrysaes, the Astaes and Baesaes dwelled in the southern lands, Maesoes, Gaetaes and Tribalaes were in the north-western and north-eastern territories.

Although the Thracians did not have writing of their own, there is plenty of other evidence that they belonged to the Hindo-Europeans. The most significant traces of their civilization are to be looked for on the tombstones. The majority of the Thracians

were farmers and shepherds but many of them were skillful craftsmen, which fact is apparent from the Vulchi Trun and Panagyurishte Treasures. The latter testify that the goldsmith's trade reached its perfection in these lands.



In the 4th century B.C. Philip II of Macedonia and his son Alexander (336-323) subjugated the majority of the Thracian tribes but soon the Thracians won back their freedom. In the meantime, in the 3rd century B.C. the Celts conquered the northern parts of the Balkan peninsula. It is known that Kavar, their last ruler, minted bronze and silver coins. The Celts remained in Bulgarian territories for over half a century.

This was the time when the Romans made their first appearance on the Balkans but their invasions ended in the 1st century A.D. Two Roman provinces were established: Misia (in the year 15th A.D.) occupied the lands between the Balkan Mountain Range and the Danube, and Thracia (in the year 46th A.D.) which occupied the territories to the south of the Balkan Mountains. The largest Roman cities were Serdika (today's Sofia), Nikopolis ad Istrum (the ruins to the north of Veliko Turnovo), Philipopolis (today's Plovdiv). After Misia and Thracia had once entered into economic and cultural relations with the Latin world, they started a period of prosperity, ample proofs for which can be found in the monuments and archeological sites.

The invasions of the Barbarians impeded the flourishing of the Roman culture and later, towards the beginning of the 4th century, they threatened the Byzantine domination after the Roman Empire had been split into Western and Eastern parts.

The Goths and the Huns in succession crossed the Danube, ruined the towns and killed a great part of the population. In the 7th century Emperor Justinian restored most of the ruins and the grandeur of that province included in his Empire. The invasions were, however, renewed, this time by the Avars.

The *Slavs* had already penetrated into the Balkan peninsula in the 5th century. In the second

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part of the 6th century they started to settle along the right stream of the river Danube. Shortly after their settling in these lands, they assimilated the Thracians to the extent that Thracian language was no more spoken. Neither was Latin used as it used to be in the past. The Thracians started to communicate in a Slavic dialect.

Finally, the *Proto-Bulgarians* who were just as bold warriors as the Avars and of the same Turko-Tatar origin, also migrated from Central Asia shaping the social and political organisation of the Slavs. The State founded in 681 by the amalgamation of Proto-Bulgarians and Slavs bore, therefore, the name "*Bulgaria*" although the Slavic ethnic element prevailed in it.

### ***The First Bulgarian Kingdom (681-1018)***

In 681 the Byzantine Emperor Constantine IV was defeated by Khan Asparuh's army at the mouth of the river Danube and signed a treaty by which he undertook to pay an annual tax to the Bulgarian Khan. This is considered to be the first recognition of the new Bulgarian state. Its first capital became *Pliska* and its territory bordered on the Black Sea in the east, on the Balkan Mountain range in the south, on the river Iskar and later on the river Timok in the west and on the Danube in the north. These territories were expanded during Khan Krum's rule (803-814) who after having defeated the Avars in the west, in 809 conquered Serdika from the Byzantines. Nikephoros I plundered Pliska and put it on fire but Krum organised a brilliant counterattack at the foot of the eastern part of the Balkan Mountain and finally won the victory against the Byzantine army. Nikephoros I was killed in a battle in 811. As a result of numerous war victories,

the Bulgarian territory was expanded far beyond the Danubian valley up to the Pissa river which served as a dividing line with the Magyars to the west and up to river Dniester which formed a natural border with the Pechenegues in the east. To the south Bulgaria reached Rila and the Rhodopes. During Khan Omurtag's rule (816-831) a thirty-year peace treaty was signed with Byzantine. Sculpture and architecture dating from that age have left remarkable monuments in Pliska and Madara. Tsar Boris I (852-889) initiated historical events of great significance. The creation of the Bulgarian alphabet by the two brothers *Cyril* and *Methodius* of Thessaloniki in 863 was one of them. In 865 Christianity was proclaimed to be the official religion. From 865 onwards Bulgaria became the cradle of



Bulgarian culture. Tsar Boris I's rule is generally agreed to have prepared the so-called Golden Age of Bulgarian literature during Tsar Simeon the Great's rule (893-927). This is also the culmination in political power and geographical expansion of the Bulgarian Kingdom. After the total defeat of the Byzantine army at Aheloy in 917, Tsar Simeon broadened its influence as far as the Galipoli peninsula in Greece, annexed Macedonia and won Serbia as a partner and later subjugated it. Tsar

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Petar I's rule (927-969) marked the beginning of a decline. The wars brought about misery and poverty. The people were additionally burdened with the taxation imposed by the predatory feudal lords. The people's resentment was expressed in the *Bogomil* movement started by priest Bogomil. The followers of the movement rejected all forms of cleric or secular domination and compared all barons to the Satan. Threatening seriously the ruling class, the Bogomils were subjected to persecution but their ideas were made popular by the distribution of a huge body of apocrypha. They were precursors of the Reform and had followers beyond the Bulgarian boundaries in Mediterranean Thracia, Asia Minor and later in Bosnia and Serbia. In 12th and 13th centuries there were Bogomil sects in Northern Italy and Southern France of various nature depending on the specific local features.

In 968 the Kiev Prince Svetoslav, who was an ally of Emperor Nikephoros II Phocas, occupied North-Eastern Bulgaria. The partnership was, however, broken and Svetoslav was imprisoned by Tsar Boris II (969-971), who inherited the throne from Tsar Petar I. The Byzantine army drove the Russians away and defeated the Bulgarian troops. Tsar Boris I was taken prisoner in Constantinople and all the Bulgarian territories between the Danube, the Black Sea and the Balkan Mountains fell under Byzantine rule. The Western Bulgarian Kingdom (969-1018) with Pliska and subsequently Ohrid as capitals did not last for more than half a century. In 1014 Emperor Basilus II's army took 15 000 Bulgarian soldiers by surprise in Belasitsa and was hence nicknamed Bulgarocton meaning "Murderer of Bulgarians". He sent back Tsar Samouil's soldiers blinded to their leader. If the Manasius's Chronicle is to be believed, Tsar Samouil died at the dreadful sight of his soldiers. In 1018 Basilus



II took Ohrid, thus putting an end to the First Bulgarian Kingdom.

*The Byzantine domination* in Bulgarian lands (1018-1185) marked a period of suffering and endurance for the Bulgarian people. To the political and cleric yoke the Pechenegues' plunderings were added together with the Crusades in 1096 and 1147. The Bogomil movement was increasingly unfolding and many of its proponents perished at the stakes in Constantinople. One of its most fervent advocates and distributors Vassiliy also died for his cause.

### ***The Second Bulgarian Kingdom (1187-1396)***

With the outbreak of the Turnovo boyars' uprising in the autumn of 1185 the two brothers Petar and Assen prepared the beginning of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. It was recognised in 1187 by a peace treaty between Bulgaria and Byzantine signed by the Byzantine Emperor Isaac II. According to it all Bulgarian lands to the north of the Balkan Mountain were acknowledged as independent under the rule of Assen. Turnovo became its capital. In 1197 Kaloyan, Assen and Petar's younger brother, ascended to the throne after a plot against Assen. Tsar Kaloyan (1197-1207) recaptured Varna, a part of Thracia and Macedonia. The peace treaty of 1201 recognised the newly conquered territories. In 1204 the Eastern Latin Empire founded by the crusaders acknowledged Tsar Kaloyan a vassal. The Bulgarian Tsar, however, refused to be dominated by Baldwin of Flanders and the troops met on April 1205 at the walls of Adrianople. Contrary to all expectations, the invincible Latin army was defeated by Tsar Kaloyan's troops and Baldwin of Flanders was captured and imprisoned in Turnovo. Unfortunately, Tsar Kaloyan could not

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make the most of his military victory and in 1207 he was murdered after a plot organised by the boyars after they had been threatened to be deprived of their privileges.

After Boril's rule (1207-1218), who in 1211 convened a church council in Turnovo to gain control over the increasing movement of the Bogomils, Ivan Assen II (1218-1241) started a new period of economic and political upheaval by reestablishing the boundaries from Tsar Simeon's time, encouraging the development of trade and arts and minting coins of gold, silver and copper. The cultural and economic flourishing culminated after the battle at Klokotnitsa (March 1230) against the Byzantine army led by Theodor Komnin.

The second half of the 13th century saw a progressive decline: Bulgaria was torn by internal conflicts among the boyars. Ruined by taxes, the Bulgarian peasants rose and having defeated the Tsar's army proclaimed a the swine-herd Ivailo to be their leader. In fact Ivailo (1277-1280) had brilliant military and organising abilities and succeeded in stopping the Tatars' invasion in the Bulgarian lands. In 1280 the boyars dethroned Ivailo and replaced him by Georgi Terter (1280-1292).

The Terter Dynasty ruled up to 1323. The only one of them who succeeded in unifying the boyars and settling down the relations with the Tatars was Theodor-Svetoslav (1300-1321).

Michail Shishman (1323-1330) was the first tsar of the Shishman dynasty. The rule of Ivan Alexander (1331-1371) and Ivan Shishman (1371-1396)



reestablished the prosperous Bulgarian cultural traditions mainly in the field of literature, painting and architecture.

Unfortunately, the wars with Byzantine and Serbia weakened the political and military power of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom and its unification was no more on the agenda. In fact, independent landlords had been ruling in Vidin (Northern Bulgaria) and the Rhodopes. The country could not, therefore, resist the young Ottoman Empire. Turnovo was conquered in 1393 and Vidin in 1396. From 1396 Bulgaria became a Turkish province for a period of five centuries.

*The Ottoman domination (1396-1878)* is the darkest period in Bulgarian history. Political domination was combined with severe religious oppression: the Bulgarian patriarchy was abolished and Bulgarian church was subordinated to the Greek one. Monasteries and cultural temples were ruined. Bulgarians were driven away from the fertile and strategic regions into the mountains. Some of them, called Bulgarian Mohammedans, were forced to adopt the Islam and thus, in principle, acquired equal right with the Ottoman people. The Bulgarian peasants were overwhelmed with the heavy taxes, levies and obligations. The "blood" levy envisaged the taking away of young Bulgarian boys who were to be trained and converted into Islam.

The Bulgarian people made repeated attempts to overthrow the Ottoman yoke. In 1402-1403 Bulgarians rose in the river Timok valley, in 1598 and 1686 in Turnovo, in 1688 - in Chiprovtsi. The haidouk or rebel movement started in the 17th century and was thereafter powerfully unfolded.

In the 18th century the *National Revival period* began. Since 1735 schools were set up outside the monasteries and the teaching was conducted in Bulgarian language. In 1762 Paissiy Hillendarski

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wrote his "History of Slavs and Bulgarians" which awoke the people's national consciousness. Reading clubs were set in almost all big towns which promoted the distribution of new culture. The Bulgarian church finally succeeded in obtaining independence from the Greek one in Constantinople. The autonomy of the Bulgarian nation was also recognized by a Turkish Law in 1870.

### ***The April Uprising of 1876 and the Liberation War (1877-1878)***

Owing to the efforts of brave Bulgarian revolutionaries as Georgi Rakovski, Vassil Levski, Lyuben Karavelov and many others revolutionary committees were set up all over the country and on April 20th 1876 the first gun was fired to signal the people's uprising in Koprivshtitsa. An enormous Turkish army was sent to put it out and plunder the restless town. Many other towns in the region were set on fire and ruined- Strelcha, Klissura, Panagyrishte. In the town of Batak the whole population was locked in the town church and slaughtered. Hristo Botev, the brilliant poet of freedom, took the leadership of the National Liberation movement, crossed the Danube with 200 courageous young volunteers to contribute with their lives to Bulgaria's Liberation. Shortly after his team reached their fatherland they were defeated in the Vrachan Balkan and their leader was shot in the forehead on May 20th 1876.

The unheard-of cruelties in Batak and the atrocities of the Turkish army impressed Europe immensely. Garibaldi, Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, Oscar Wilde and Gladstone reechoed to the suffering of the Bulgarian people.

In August 1876 Victor Hugo wrote in the Parliamentary newspaper: "The attention of the European governments needs to be drawn on the fact,

a very insignificant fact overlooked by them... A whole nation has been exterminated... Will the suffering of its small but heroic people ever end? It is high time that civilization puts an end to it. We, the nation, we corder our governments to proclaim the banning of these cruelties."

The failure of the April Uprising demonstrated that Bulgaria could not cope with the Ottoman Empire on its own. Foreign help was needed. With the Great Powers having misunderstandings on the question of Bulgaria, the Russian Tsar took the initiative in his own hands. Russia declared war on Turkey in 1877 and its troops entered Bulgaria through Roumania, sieged the Pleven fortress and took top Shipka with the help of Bulgarian volunteers. Then, they headed to Adrianopolis (today Edrene) and Constantinople. Tsar Alexander II signed the *San Stefano treaty* on *March 3rd 1878* when the boundaries of Great Bulgaria were reestablished.



### ***The Third Bulgarian Kingdom (1879-1944)***

The San Stefano peace treaty signed on March 3rd 1878 was revised by the the Berlin Congress in July 1978. The western great powers were frightened by the increasing Russian influence in Great Bulgaria and cut a part of its territories - Macedonia, parts of Thracia and deprived it from its strategic outlet on the Aegean Sea. The rest of the country was vassal to the Sultan, the territories north of the Balkan Range being called Principality Bulgaria and ruled by an elected prince; the southern territories being called Eastern Romelia and ruled by a governor appointed by the High Gates and subordinate to the Turkish political and military authorities.

In spite of all these, Bulgaria embarked on its independent economic and social development. In 1879 the Great National Assembly adopted the Turnovo Constitution outstanding with its liberal ideas. It recognised the main human freedoms - the freedom of expression, of the mass media, the political parties, meetings and it protected private property. The German Prince Alexander Battenberg was elected by the Great National Assembly and tried to solve some of the main internal conflicts - between Liberals and Conservatives. In his external policy he experienced diplomatic disagreements with Russia. The continuous protests and people's discontent resulted in the Unification of Principality Bulgaria and Eastern Romelia on September 18th 1885. The act was immediately followed by the declaration of war to Bulgaria by the Serbian Tsar Milan who had been instigated by Austro-Hungary

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with the claim that the balance on the Balkans had been destroyed. The Serbian troops were, however, defeated at Slivnitsa and the Bucharest Treaty from March 3rd 1886 acknowledged the status of a unified Bulgaria.

On August 21st 1886 Prince Battenberg was dethroned after a plot of officers sympathetic to Russia. The Chairman of the National Assembly organised yet another coup d'état. Battenberg was invited to ascend to the power again but he preferred to abdicate and delegated his powers to a Regents' Council headed by Stambolov.

The political crisis was solved in July 1887 when Ferdinand, strongly related to Austro-Hungary, was elected by the National Assembly and assigned the task of forming the new government to Stambolov.

Up to 1894 the country remained under the government of Stambolov who conducted anti-Russian policy and maintained strong and cruel police. A secret plot worsened the authoritarian rule in March 1891. Ferdinand, who disapproved of the Prime Minister's policy, accepted his resignation. Ferdinand further consolidated his power proclaiming himself Tsar of all Bulgarians on October 6th in Turnovo, thus rejecting the obligations for loyalty to Turkey imposed by the Berlin Congress.

The emerging capitalism gave an impetus to the working class movement. In 1891 the Bulgarian Social-Democratic party was established at its first congress on top Buzludja. The opportunist trends within the party were overthrown and Dimitar Blagoev founded the Bulgarian Proletariat Social-Democratic Party in 1894.

The industrial development suffered severely from the loss of the outlet on the Aegean Sea. On

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the other hand, the people of Macedonia and Thracia were still under Ottoman domination. In 1912 the Entente was formed on the Balkans which included Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and later Montenegro. On October 17th the allies declared war on Turkey and eventually defeated it. As a result, in accordance with the London treaty, Turkey abandoned all the territories to the west of the line Midia-Enos. Unfortunately, the allies could not reach an agreement as to the distribution of the regained territories. On June 1913 Bulgaria attacked the Serbian and Greek troops in Macedonia to claim its rights there. In his ambition to conquer Ferdinand had underestimated the coalition which was by that time joined by Roumania and Turkey. The second Balkan war, known as "the allies' war" ended with Bulgaria's capitulation and, in accordance with the Bucharest Treaty from August 1913, Southern Dobrudja was given to Roumania.

During the *World War I* after long hesitation Bulgaria sided with Germany and attacked Serbia in October 1915. On September 1918 the Thessaloniki detachments pressed the Bulgarian army in the river Vardar valley and Bulgaria was forced to sign its first truce on September 28th 1918. Ferdinand was now the head of a mutinous army and a discontent people ready to rise any moment. He abdicated on October 3rd 1918 when the throne was succeeded by his son Boris. The Neuilly Treaty, signed on November 27th 1919, deprived Bulgaria of its outlet on the Aegean Sea.

The people's resentment caused by the two national catastrophes in 1913 and 1918 gave a further impetus to the revolutionary movement. Famine, unemployment and misery gained more and



more people for the working class movement. On May 27th the Bulgarian Communist Party was founded, which entered a union with the revolutionary movement in Macedonia and Odrin.

The general elections in 1921 were won with a striking majority by the Agrarian Union. The new government was led by Alexander Stamboliyski and was strongly supported by the common people especially by the peasants. The bourgeoisies preferred it to the increasing communist influence. Stamboliyski's rule did not last long and was turned down by the military coup d'etat on June 9th 1923, when Stamboliyski himself was brutally murdered. The new government had a pro-fascist policy and its chief aim was to abandon the communist party which was gaining influence and was supported by the agrarian party. This was a time of political repression and persecution which broadened the conflict between the working class and the peasants, on the one hand, and the bourgeoisie, on the other. The Bulgarian Communist Party was proscribed and fascist dictatorship was imposed.

In 1934 Tsar Boris III took radical steps, suspended the Turnovo Constitution with the human freedoms it granted and all political parties were proscribed. This was the time when diplomatic relations were established with the USSR. Bulgaria was on its way to warm its relations with Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, Bulgaria was involved in the policy of fascism in spite of the common people and intellectuals' disapproval. Despite all the demonstrations in the first months of *World War II*, the government rejected the Soviet proposal for a mutual agreement between the two countries. Instead, the Bulgarian government was forced to sign the

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Vienna Treaty on March 1st 1941 by which it was obliged to ensure access of the German troops to its territories. The Government, however, did not avail itself of the opportunity to annex Macedonia. Thanks to the mediation of USSR, Southern Dobrudja was regained on September 7th 1940.

After Hitler's invasion in the Soviet Union on June 22nd 1941 the *guerrilla movement* was started in Bulgaria. In 1942 the National Front was established which involved all the anti-fascist forces in the country. Tsar Boris III himself never broke the diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Hitler was annoyed by this and other such facts. Tsar Boris III died on the following day after a heated argument with the Furer.

On September 15th 1944 the Soviet army was at the Bulgarian border and had to declare war. It acted in agreement with the Bulgarian guerrilla movement and some military units and organisations, who had deserted the regular army. The monarch power was turned down overnight on *September 8th* 1944 and was taken by the National Front under the leadership of Kimon Georgiev of the Independent Party "Zveno".

The truce between Bulgaria, on the one hand, and the United States, USSR and Great Britain, on the other, was signed on October 28th 1944 in Moscow. The Bulgarian army joined the Soviet in Yugoslavia, Hungary and Austria as well as in the battle at river Drava. The Paris Treaty from February 1947 recognised Southern Dobrudja to be a part of the Bulgarian territories.

Bulgaria was proclaimed republic after a referendum held on September 8th 1946 and on September 15th it became People's Republic of Bul-

garia. Its first leader was the communist leader Georgi Dimitrov, who died in 1949 and was succeeded by Vassil Kolarov. Chervenkov took the power in his hands in 1950 after Kolarov's death. Anton Yugov replaced him after the destalinisation. In 1962 Todor Zhivkov became Chairman of the Council of Ministers and in 1971 he was also given the chair of the State Council which two posts he held until *November 10th 1989*. This memorable date marks the real changes in social and political life towards democracy.

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## GEOGRAPHY

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Bulgaria is situated in South-Eastern Europe where it occupies the north-eastern part of the Balkan peninsula. In its area (approximately 111 000 sq. km) and population (approximately 9 000 000 inhabitants) the country ranges among the smallest in Europe.

Bulgaria owes a lot to its favourable geographical situation at the crossroads of Western and Central Europe with the Near and Far East.

### ***Characteristic Features***

From geographical point of view, the name of a Balkan country is more appropriate for Bulgaria than for any other of the neighbouring countries since the *Balkan Range*, known as the Balkan, stretches across its territory.

To the north Bulgaria borders on Roumania, the



dividing line being the river Danube. To the west Bulgaria has common frontiers with Serbia and Macedonia, to the south - with Greece and Turkey. The Black Sea provides a natural border in the east and a direct connection with Ukraine and through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles - with the Mediterranean countries.

There are three main geographical regions: the Danubian plain, the mountain massif made up of two different mountain ranges - the Balkan and the Rhodopes, and the South-eastern plain including the so-called Maritsa basin, which is historically the ancient part of Romelia.

### ***The Bulgarian Mountains***

*The Balkan Range*, or, as it is called in Bulgarian, *Stara Planina* ("the Old Mountain"), is the longest mountain range in the Balkan peninsula. It belongs to the mountain systems of the Alps and the Carpathians. It spans from the Serbian border near the river Timok to cape Emine on the Black Sea. In its western part, near peak Shipka, the Balkan range averages between 1 500 m and 2 376 m in height, Peak Botev being its highest summit. The Balkan Mountain has deep passages only in the river Iskar valley. The middle southern Balkan slope is relatively steep, whereas the northern one descends gently towards the Danubian plain. The highest parts are deeply covered in greenery with pastures and beech woods along the ridges.

The first two Bulgarian kingdoms were situated in the Pre-Balkan regions thanks to the natural protection and the variety of relief it offers. The strongholds of Pliska, Preslav and Turnovo made advantage of the surrounding hillocks and the geographically diverse locality. Later, the national awareness

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continued to be kindled in the Balkan Mountains during the struggle against Ottoman oppression and the National Liberation movement. Top Shipka remains to be a sacred and heroic name for every Bulgarian.

Nowadays a number of balneological centres are located in Berkovitsa, Etropole, Teteven, Troyan, Kotel.

The central massif *Sredna Gora* is situated to the south and runs parallel to the Balkan Range. The highest summit Bogdan is 1 604 m high. Its slopes descend gently down to the Thracian plain. The river Tundja valley divides the Balkan Range from Sredna Gora and in it the famous Rose Valley is to be found. Kazanluk is the main centre associated with the Rose Valley.

*Strandja* and *Vitosha* mountains belong to the same tectonic background as Sredna Gora. *Vitosha* dominates the south-western parts of Sofia and is thought of as a natural continuation of Sredna Gora above the Pancharevsko Gorge. The rivers Iskar and Struma spring from there. Peak Cherni Vruh (2 290 m) is the highest point in Vitosha, which has been turned into a national park and a desired place for tourism and rest. Its varied flora attracts lovers of nature throughout the year. Vitosha is also known as “the lungs” of the capital.

*Strandja* expands to the south-east of the Tundja country almost as far as Istanbul. Most of it is situated in Tur-



key. It is believed to have an ancient tectonic origin. Its peaks never rise very highly and are generally round.

*The Rhodopes* are the vastest mountain range in Bulgaria. To the north and east it borders on the river Maritsa Valley, to the west on the river Mesta, to the south a small part of it is situated in Greece. Peak Golyam Perelik (2 191m) is the highest in the Rhodopes.

Two more mountains are to be found to the west of the rivers Mesta and Struma and are closely connected with the Rhodopes. The first one is *Rila*, where peak Musala (2 925 m) is the highest summit in the Balkan peninsula. Rila is a luring place to visit because of its fascinating steep slopes, covered in snow all the year round, its grandeur, climate and, of course, the famous Rila Monastery which played a major role in Bulgarian history.

*Pirin* is situated further to the south and is famous as the mountain of winds and storms. Its name is often associated with the deity Perun -God of Thunder. Its highest top is Vihren (2 915m). Of all Bulgarian mountains Pirin is probably the only one which has managed to preserve to the greatest extent its virgin nature. Its hillocks are covered with fir and pine trees. This is also the country of the edelweiss.

*Belassitsa*, *Ossogovo* and *Ograzhdene* summits are situated to the west of Struma.

## **Plains and Valleys**

*The Danubian plain* occupies the land to the north of the Balkan Range and to the south of the Danube. It is a plateau of an average altitude of 150 m above sea-level, grooved by numerous rivers gushing from the Balkan Range and flowing

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into the Danube. The lands to the east of Rousse up to the Black sea are occupied by the *Dobrudja plain*. There are less grooves in the relief of Ludogorie, or, as it used to be called the Deliorman.

Occupying over a fourth of the country's territory the Danubian plain is famous for being Bulgaria's granary: it supplies more than half of the grain harvest of the country's agricultural produce.

*The south-eastern plain* borders on Sredna Gora in the north and on the Rhodopes in the south-west. It includes mainly the river Maritsa basin. It is also known as Upper Thracia and is often compared to lower or Greek Thracia. Since Homer's times this region has been associated with the fertility of its land, with its messengers "faster than the wind" and its thick-fleeced sheep.

The rich fruit and vegetable gardens are altered with spacious vineyards, hemp, flax and rice fields. Most importantly, however, first class tobacco is grown in this district.

Mention should also be made of the region below the Balkan Range, the Sofia plain and Struma valley where vegetables are grown earliest every year.

## **Climate**

According to its climatic characteristics Bulgaria is divided into three zones. *Northern Bulgaria* enjoys a moderate continental climate, while *the Thracian plain* has a climate comparable to the the Mediterranean one. The average annual tempearture is about 12°C. The temperature in January does not generally drop below -2°C in the North and is usually above the zero in the South. In July the tempearture varies between 23 and 24°C. Along *the Black Sea Cost* there is a less marked difference

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in temperatures: in Varna the average January temperatures do not exceed  $3^{\circ}\text{C}$  and in summer they are around  $21^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Autumn is generally mild and warm.

The different regions receive different amounts of rainfall depending on their relief. In the Danubian plain they average about 600 mm per sq m, the most significant being in the beginning of summer. The Thracian plain obtains less rainfall and droughts often start as early as August. In Eastern Dobrudja the rainfall does not exceed 450 mm per sq m and in Tundja and Maritsa valleys it is lower than 500 mm. The mountain regions get plenty of rainfall and in Rila, Pirin, the Rhodopes and the Balkan Range it is about 1 000 mm on the average.

### ***Water Resources***

Although Bulgaria has a fairly dense river network, none of the rivers is navigable with the exception of the Danube. Most of the rivers flowing into the Danube spring from the Balkan range except for the river Iskar, which leads its beginning from Rila. Many rivers flow into the Black Sea as *Provadiya river*, *Kamchia*, *Ropotamo*, *Dyavolska*, *Veleka*, *Rezovska*, etc. The latter three gush from Strandja Mountain. *Maritsa* and its largest tributary *Tundja* gather their waters from the Balkan range in the north and the Rhodopes in the south. *Struma* which together with *Maritsa* flows into the Aegean Sea draws its waters from Rila and Pirin to the left and from the neighbouring Serbian and Macedonian mountains to the right. River *Mesta* springs from Pirin and also flows into the Aegean Sea. The Danubian and the Maritsa basins cover two-thirds of the territory of the two plains. In the western parts of the Rhodopes water systems and dams

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have been built as the dams "Batak", "Vassil Kolarov", "Studen Kladenets", "Kurdjali", "Ivaylovgrad", the hydroenergetic system Arda, etc. The dam Iskar has also been built in the vicinity of Sofia. Other strategic dams are "Georgi Dimitrov", "Alexander Stamboliyski", "Beli Iskar", "Petrohan", "Brezitsa", etc.

## **Vegetation and animal life**

*Bulgarian nature* varies according to the four climatic types - continental, Mediterranean, mountainous and steppe. A number of the extinct species in other countries can still be seen in Bulgaria, to mention but a few of them *Ramondia sorbiea*, *Prunus laurocerasus*, *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, *Rheum rhaponticum*, *Astragalus physocalyx*, *Rhododendron pouticum*, etc. Over 3 200 species can be listed to be grown in Bulgaria. Various kinds of plants are grown in most places depending on the soil type and quality as well as to meet the demands of the population. There are, however, zones with preserved natural vegetation mainly at the Kamchia river mouth, in the valley of Ropotamo river, in the Pre-Balkan regions and some islands in the Danube. *The forests* occupy over a third of the country's territory. In the vast coniferous woods in Rila, Pirin and the Western Rhodopes one can find white and pitch pine, fir-tree, alder, Norway spruce, etc. Deciduous forests prevail in the Balkan range, Sredna Gora and Strandja where oaks and beeches are most common, followed by hornbeams, ash-trees, elms, lime-trees and hazels.

Horse- chestnut trees can be found in the western parts of the Balkan range and in Belassitsa.

*The animal life* in Bulgaria is a queer mixture of European species from the central and northern



zones with Mediterranean ones. the bat is very common together with the jackal in Strandja. The bearded eagle is a common representative of the birds of pray. The mammals are represented by the bear, the wolf, the fox, the badger, the wild cat, the deer, the boar, etc. Pelicans, partridges and pheasants poulate the numerous reservations spread all over the country. Various kinds of fish may be caught in Bulgaria both river and sea. The reptiles are represented by more than 50 species. The diversity of insects and butterflies may meet the curiosity even of the most meticulous collector. Over 1 100 species of butterflies may be caught in Bulgaria. One can also see about 75 different species living in the mountain caves.



## BULGARIAN FOLK ART

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### ***FESTIVALS AND CUSTOMS***

According to the Greek philosopher Democritus, life without festivals resembles a long journey without inns to stop at. According to ethnographic experts, the rites connected to Bulgarian festivals



exceed 11 000. Indeed, endless is the path of customs which have accompanied the Bulgarians from the cradle to the grave. However, they have one thing in common, and that is... But let's take first things first, and only then venture into generalisations.

The richest picture in the winter calendar is that of New Year's customs which lend a national colouring to these worldwide celebrations.

Since times immemorial

#### **THE FIRE AND SPREAD**

have been symbols of generosity and abundance. The richer the spread on the table, the more fruitful the coming year was to be. This is why every kind of food produced in the village is placed on the table. The ritual bread depicts symbols of vines and hives, of the field and the garden. A special place is devoted to the *banitsa* (typical Bulgarian cheese pastry) with baked-in cornel twigs symbolising the home and the cattle, good health and sound learning. The honour of kindling the fire befalls on

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the eldest person at home. From early morning, swept up with a jumper broom, the fireplace awaits the yule-log - a solid log, usually of oak because of its longevity. It is at dusk, and its burning throughout the night spells the future and fertility. Many rites and wishes for prosperity form part of that night. But it is the impatiently awaited

### **SOURVAKARI**

(*men going from house to house wishing people a Happy New Year*) who must say the magic words. Late after midnight, they set out on their round of the homes, tapping everybody on the back with decorated cornel twigs, with wishes for health, long life and success. The cornel twig, or *sourvachka*, is their indispensable attribute, and is differently decorated in the country's different regions.

### **KOLEDOUVANE**

(*Christmas Carol Singing*) is a nation-wide custom which shares many common features with the *sourvakane*. The *koledari* (carol singers) also visit the household with wishes for health and prosperity. They are presented with specially prepared food. Again, their dress and ornaments differ from region to region. Instead of *sourvachka*, however, they carry a *koleradka* - a long oak stick, richly carved. Extremely colourful folklore is characteristic of this custom - songs, blessings, dances. Here is the main difference between them: the *koleradi* perform on Christmas Eve, the *sourvakari* on New Year's Day. Stemming from the difference between the Julian and the Georgian calendar, both customs have preserved their original vitality and are related in meaning.

The last major winter holiday of the Bulgarian peasants is the **FIST SUNDAY BEFORE LENT** (*seven weeks before Easter*). From that date onwards, until autumn when the field work is completed, no marriages are concluded. The most important custom

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of the week are the Mummers' games. They are related to the Dionysian festivities of the ancient Thracians, and stand for abundance in the broadest sense - from a barn full of wheat, to a house full of children.

### **THE MUMMERS CUSTOM (KUKERI)**

marks the beginning of the spring calendar, and the preparations for it take some more time. Everybody makes his own personal mask - a proof of the skill and aesthetic feeling of each mummer. This is why no two ritual masks resemble each other. In general, they are multi-coloured, covered with beads, ribbons and woollen tassels. The dress, too, is colourful and florid, once again the fruit of individual imagination. The colourfulness of masks, dress and ritual dances lend a theatrical or carnival feature to the custom. An important element of it is the symbolic ploughing and sowing - a sign of rich harvest from the fields and gardens. The heavy swaying of the main mummer is meant to represent wheat heavy with grain, and the bells tied around the waist are intended to drive away the evil and sickness.





**TRIFON ZAREZAN**

which is celebrated on the 14th of February is another long-standing custom of an occupational nature. On Vinegrower's day, the wines are pruned and sprinkled with wine throughout the country. Ritual songs and dances are performed around the abundant spread, with wishes for a plentiful harvest. In some areas a "Vine King" is chosen who is crowned with a wreath of wine twigs. Everybody treats him with great respect, for it is believed that fertility will depend on the King's happiness.

**THE MARTENITZA**

is a unique national custom known only in Bulgaria and originating from the ancient Thracians. The first martenitzas were made of white and red woollen thread to which a silver coin was tied occasionally. The March the First rites are interesting and varied. In some regions women dress completely in red on this day, and in North-East Bulgaria the lady of the house tosses a red cloth over a fruit-tree, or spreads red wool onto the field for fertility. In stock-breeding areas a white and red thread is tied to the cattle. The tradition today is as alive as ever: every year on March 1, the Bulgarians present each other with martenitzas.

**ST. GEORGE'S DAY**

is the most important celebration day. It takes place on May 6 and has a strongly occupational content, marking the beginning of commerce and stock-breeding for the year. Its vivid ritual features have been preserved until today - on the night before May 6, young boys pick blossoming willow twigs to decorate the house, pens and cattle for health. During the night the sheep are turned out to grass because the dew is said to have curative powers at that time. During the day, the table is laid with ritual bread and dishes, and merry songs are sung, with the traditional wishes for joy and abundance.

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Not long before the St. George's Day the great festival of youth take place:

### **LAZAROUVANE**

Alive and celebrated throughout the country, it is of Slav origin and, besides the assertion of fertility, also bears an element of love and marriage. This also determines the particular attention paid to dress: festive and beautiful, with superb heavy jewellery. The lazarouvane is a string of ritual games and songs studied in advance by the young girls during the long Lent. The ritual versions are many, the difference being in the celebrations of St. Lazar's Day itself (8 days before Easter). The feature shared in common, however, is the coming out of girls fit to be married.

Getting married and setting up a home has always been part of feelings and hopes of the Bulgarian. In days of old, people believed that the greater the rituals devoted to marriage, the better the guarantee for happiness, long life and house full of children.

The family custom of the

### **BULGARIAN WEDDING**

is a string of rituals and symbols. Although it starts with the invitation of the guests, preparations in both houses continue for days: wedding banners are made, bread is baked, and a number of rituals symbolising the end of bachelorhood and maidenhood are performed. The dressing of the bride is an exiting ritual, and the departure from the native home is saturated with emotion - in the yard, thickly veiled, the bride turns to the door and her parents with three ritual farewell bows.

Her welcome at the groom's house is also accompanied by interesting symbolic actions. She is presented with bread and salt, wine and honey - so that his and hers married life may be sweet and harmonious.

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Have you noticed the common feature of the Bulgarian festivities and customs? It is the ideal person whose traits and virtue, industriousness, a sharp mind, good health and a sense of beauty. And good actions! The acting figures of all popular celebrations: the koledari, the sourvakari, the mummers and lazarki, in all possesses the unusual power of doing good; their wishes and blessings inevitably chase away the evil. In this sense, the Bulgarian festivals and customs are a moral, aesthetic and philosophical behest passed down from generation to generation. Developed and enriched, they have remained alive as man's contacts with his environment and his fellow-men.

### **FOLKLORE MUSIC**

It is inseparable not only from the family or calendar holidays, but also from the Bulgarians' life as a whole. The claim that the songs are the essence of a nation is hardly an exaggeration. Songs have accompanied the Bulgarians during work days and holidays, in periods of historical upsurge and in times of trial, in joy and in sorrow. The paradox that *The Bulgarian sings when in sorrow* is not accidental. This propensity for melody has helped to create songs everywhere, for any occasion - traditional songs (Christmas, Easter, St. George's Day, singing to the rings or a prayer for rain), songs sung while working (during the harvest, a working-bee, grape picking, the hay making season, etc.), songs sung at table, dance songs, refrains, and many others. Insofar as geographic division is concerned, it is not strictly outlined, although certain typical features characterise the following musical dialects: North-Bulgarian, Doubroudjianian, Thracian, Shoppe, Pirin, Sredna Gora and Rhodopian.

What are the distinguishing features of the Bulgarian folk song?

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It is chiefly *homophonic*. Even when two groups are singing (choir and choir, soloist and choir), even when they alternate in singing or one of the sides leads, followed by the other, the song sounds single-voiced. Its *rhythm* and *wealth* are on a scale which is qualified by specialists as ranging "from states fantastic from the point of view of a foreigner to primitive monotony". This is achieved by means of diverse time combination on the basis of *extended time*. This technique makes Bulgarian folk songs unique, while extended time is its distinguishing feature that is unknown in European music. It is most vividly used in Rhodopian songs.

The style of the Bulgarian folk song is qualified as hard owing to the strong performer's voice preferred by the people. In case of women it is clear and pure and creates the impression of ringing silver.

In spite the fact that the Bulgarian folk music is primarily vocal,

### THE INSTRUMENTS

are also many and diverse. They can be divided into three groups: single and two-voice wind instruments (pipe, shepherd's pipe, bagpipe, wooden pipe), string instruments (rebec, pandore), and percussion instruments (drum). The instrumental music rests on the vocal one, and conforms to the respective instrument.

Over 70 000 folk songs have been collected at the Folklore Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, but the most important thing is that they are alive *outside te museum door*. Folk songs are the basis of contemporary Bulgarian music in all its different genres. Compositions resting on, and stylised in a folk style are distinguished by originality and are greatly valued in Europe reaping successes on the international stage.

## APPLIED ARTS AND CRAFTS

The Bulgarians' innate aesthetic sensitivity creates art from every kind of material. The desire for beauty has led to work tools being decorated with figures and lines, and wood being carved in various shapes. Garments come alive with braidings, embroidery and jewellery. Prompted by a sense of beauty in everyday life, applied crafts first emerged at home. Their scale and variety gradually increased, and the masters came to perfect their skill in the spirit of national traditions. Thus, at the end of the 14th century, art and crafts in Bulgaria amounted to about 50. On the other hand, progress in quality is expressed in the fine artistic finish, particularly in the case of precious metals, in the wealth of composition and in ornamentation.

*The aesthetic principle* of the Bulgarian masters stems from the admiration of nature, and is expressed in the attempt to resemble it. This piety also determined the laws of colour, which are best seen in the case of embroidery and textile crafts.

### BULGARIAN EMBROIDERY

is used exclusively for dress decoration.. It is geographically differentiated depending on decoration, execution, colour and composition. Typical features of embroidery, however, are plant and geometric patterns and their skilful technical fashioning.

The artistic effect is achieved mainly through the interplay of colours. As in the case of folk songs, the rhythmic wealth is the result of arrangement and combination of hues: ranging from the soft shades of autumn gold, to the dark infusion of walnut leaves, from the pale shades to vivid colour contrasts. Still, the red always prevails.

The preference for it and the colour combinations also reigns in

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## TEXTILE ART

which includes the weaving of covers, rugs and carpets. There is evidence of carpet-making in Bulgaria as early as in the 9th century, but the large carpet industry centres were established during the National Revival period (18th-19th century) - Kotel, Chiprovtsi, Samokov and Panagyurishte.



It is difficult to encompass the decorative diversity of the Bulgarian carpet. but on the whole, the Kotel carpet features large and orderly patterns while Chiprovtsi carpets tend to have small patterns. The so-called rugs also fall within the carpet genre. The interesting feature in their case is the technical execution - they are fleecy, with woollen tassels brought out on one side. The Rhodopes rugs are woven on wide strips of white, brown and yellow, their long woollen fringes softening the contour and adding warmth to the decoration. Rugs with short fringes were known in the Balkan Peninsula as "yambolii" after the name of the Bulgarian town of Yambol where they were made. They feature large patterns and contrasting colours on a white background.

## POTTERY

is perhaps the oldest Bulgarian craft. Finds dating from the First Bulgarian State (7th-12th century) and from the Middle ages testify for a pronounced national style in this craft, which is also highly artistic. This can be seen both in the shape and in the decorations. Etching, colour painting and applications are the usual methods. Etching, or the circular drawing-out of straight lines, continued up



to the 19th century in the old pottery centres Teteven, Troyan, Gabrovo and Trun. In more recent times it has been replaced by painting with colour. The most typical shape of Bulgarian pottery is the jug, with an elongated delicate



neck, its top glazed in yellow and green. The lenticular flat brandy bottles are also typical.

### WOOD-CARVING

is another craft of an applied and artistic nature. Among the Bulgarians it is considered a purely male craft, and there are two main types of wood-carving: small-surface and large deep wood-cuts.

Since immemorial times, the Bulgarians have carved wood, depicting nature on shepherds' pipes and crooks, on chests and cradles, on weaving looms - in fact, wherever possible. Where wood was part of the house furniture, skilful hands brought it to life, imagination adding new figures, devices and compositions. Thus, low fretwork also began appearing in combination with paint.

From a widely practised art it turned into a craft (15th-18th century). Centres were created, where wood-carving became hereditary traditional profession (Triavna, Koprivshtitsa, Kotel, Zheravna, Troyan and Teteven). During the National Revival (18th to 19th century), low fretwork also gained foot in architecture - with a prevalence of geometric and plant knotwork but on a larger scale. Having first appeared on the capitals of wooden pillars, it gradually became part and parcel of the interior. Nowa-

days, magnificent compositions may be seen in the National Renaissance houses in Kotel, Triavna, Teteven and Koprivshtitsa.

Deep sculptured fretwork is less popular as a profession and is linked with the architecture of royal and boyars' palaces of the 9th century. During the 18th century it marked an upsurge, with the carving of altars in monasteries. All that time, centres and schools with their own characteristic features emerged (Athos, Debur, Triavna). Their masterpieces can be seen today in churches and monasteries throughout the country.

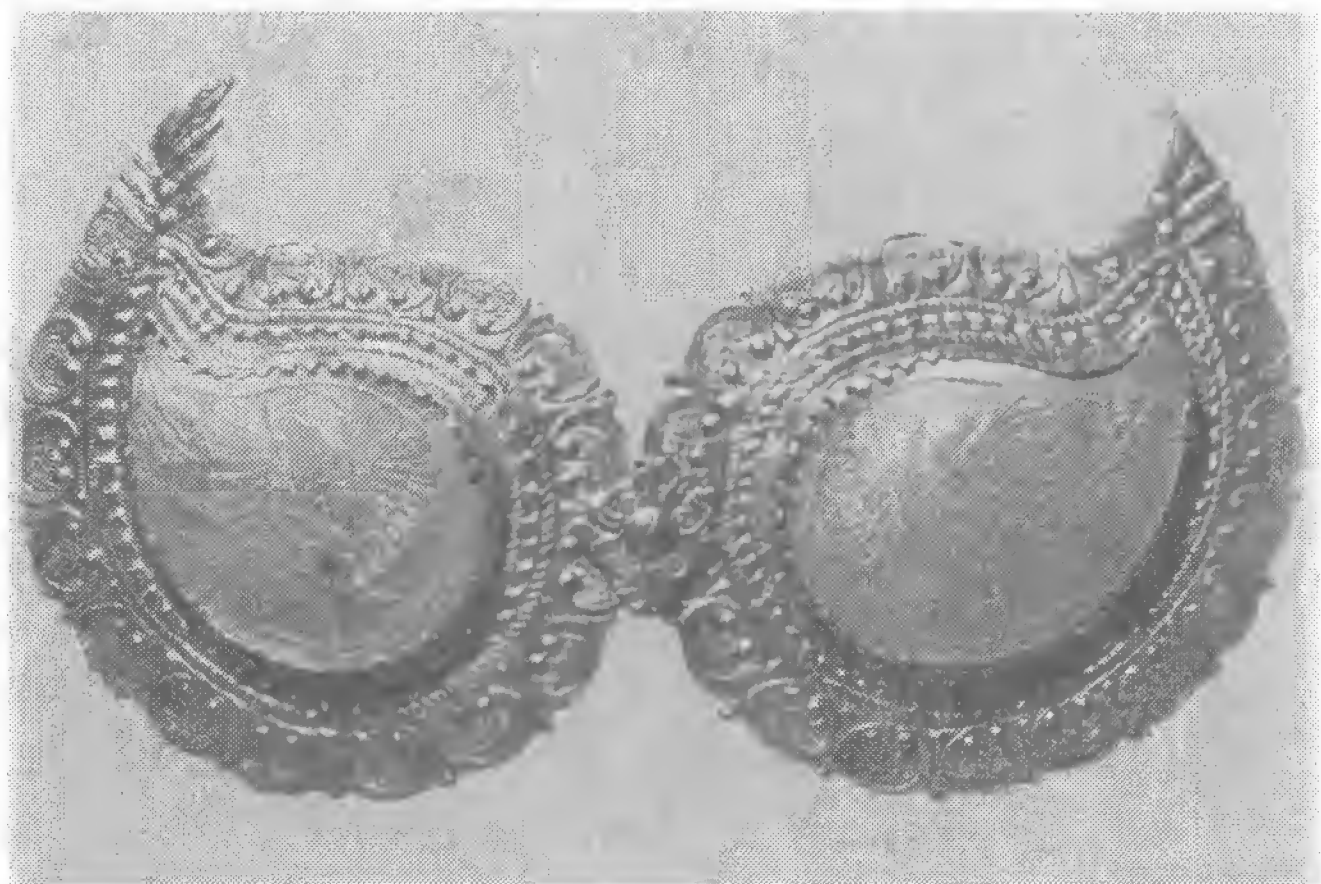
### **COPPERSMITHERY**

too, is a pronounced artistic craft which had its heyday during the 18th-19th century when methods of decoration became more numerous. Engraving and open work friezes, the plastic curving and breaking up of walls started being applied. The fashioning of form itself is an art: depending on the size and density of the indentations, the decoration of coffee pots, cauldrons, trays and dishes resembles a string of tiny beads or scattered stars. Add to this the soft silvery shine of tin-plated walls, and you will find it easy to understand the Bulgarians' fondness of copper vessels which have their romantic place in today's modern interior, too.

### **GOLDSMITHERY**

is an art whose works are purely decorative. Even in the fashioning of tableware, the artistic element dominates. Having inherited the rich traditions of the Thracians, the Bulgarian goldsmithery attained a perfection of the form and exquisite finish mainly by means of granulation, filigree and the combination of the two (between the 16th and the 19th centuries). Although this art was most susceptible to outside influence - particularly that of West European Baroque - the plant and geometric ornament, as well as the composition retained their

national characteristics. It is not by chance that works of Bulgarian goldsmithery are kept in treasure-houses and museums outside the country - in Mount Athos, Romania and Serbia.



## **ARCHITECTURE**

Having made its first steps under the cultural influence of Thracians, Proto-Bulgarians and Slavs (9th century), our national architecture quickly started shaping its own face. By the end of the 10th century it had already considerably freed itself from foreign influence. The stylistic features which form part of the Bulgarian architectural tradition, namely the blending with the environment, the contact and harmony with nature, the rejection of stern and static forms are discernible today in the preserved building of the Boyana Church (Boyana suburb, Sofia). During the Second Bulgarian State (12th-14th century) the enriched stylistic techniques of exterior decoration were manifested in the Forty Martyrs Church and in St. Peter and Paul Church in Veliko Turnovo, before attaining their peak in the Nessebur churches of Pantokrator and Aleiturgetot. The picturesqueness and mobility of the composition reached their perfection during the National

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Revival period (18th-19th century) when great masterpieces of architecture were created such as the Rila Monastery, the Holy Trinity Church in Svishtov and, of course, the Bulgarian National Renaissance house. Depending on the overall appearance and the interior decoration - wood carving or murals - on the colouring of iron facings, the houses and architectural ensembles of the National Revivals differ in the different regions. What they all share in common, however, and what makes us still marvel, is the perfect sense of artistic measure, the feeling of immediacy, intimacy and complete harmony between man and nature. Everything in these houses is where it should belong: bay-windows, eaves and gate. Everything inside captivates one by the modest exquisiteness of the Bulgarian home - a fireplace, colourful rugs and carpets, gleaming copper vessels on the shelves, and the warmth of carved ceilings.

National Revival architecture also had its peaks in public construction - bridges, inns, schools and fountains. They are all fine examples adding a national touch to present-day construction.









## **BULGARIAN LITERATURE**

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Bulgarian literature does not have a smooth and uninterrupted development. The most significant period in its history lasted four centuries. On the other hand, however, the most prominent representatives of the Bulgarian literature were often preachers, spiritual and revolutionary leaders, advocates of the National Liberation, freedom and democracy. Bulgarian literature is felt to be an integrative part of the building the national consciousness, confidence and dignity.

In *the Middle Ages* Bulgarian literature had already had a history of over a thousand years. The eleventh-century jubilee was recently celebrated of the special alphabet, called Glagolitsa, which was used for the translation of the Gospel into Slavic. In 863 the clergyman Constantine the Philosopher, whose secular name was *Cyril*, was assigned by the Byzantine authorities to spread the sacred Byzantine books to Moravia in the language of its native population. In 869 after Cyril's death, his brother *Methodius* continued his noble task. The alphabet named after Cyril was a later revision of Glagolitsa. The Cyrillic alphabet is still used by all Bulgarians, Russians, Ukrainians and Serbians.

Being a cradle of the Slavic culture, Bulgarian literature flourished with religious works at first. Their authors fulfilled two tasks at a time : they preached and advocated independence from Byzantine. The most outstanding representatives of that period in Bulgarian literature were Kliment of Ohrid, Constantine of Preslav, Chernorizets Hrabar, whose literary works in its essence was anti-Byzantine. Later their beliefs were taken over by Tsar Simeon

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who was himself a remarkable politician and a man of letters. He encouraged Bulgarian culture to break away with the Greek canons. The icons in Ohrid and Preslav give evidence of a new treatment of the official literary production. At the same time the body of literature about saints and apocrypha, legends with ambiguous interpretation was increasing and was suggestive of the emerging heretic Bogomil movement. The latter seemed to have supporters even in the remotest corners of the kingdom and was directed against the privileged feudal lords and the clergy.

In the period of Byzantine domination (1018 - 1186) the development of Bulgarian literature was retarded and hindered. During the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (1186 - 1396), however, it started prospering again. The 14th century was a landmark in its development when such eminent writers worked as Theodosiy of Turnovo and his disciples, Evtimiy of Turnovo who wrote the biography of Ivan Rilski and St Petka as well as his follower Grigoriy Tsamblak who wrote the eulogy of his teacher Evtimiy.

Noteworthy, the body of oral literary works played an important role in the history of the Bulgarian literature, especially during the period of Ottoman domination. It included folk songs, legends, stories and tales which gave vent to the Bulgarian people's cravings for love, freedom and liberation.

The Revival period in Bulgaria started as late as the 18th century with the "*History of Slavs and Bulgarians*", written by the monk Paisiy of Hilendar in 1762. With it a new leaf was turned in Bulgarian history and the movement for national self-consciousness and independence. The book was published in 1844 but many copies had been written in hand and spread all over the country advocating

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the struggle against both Ottoman oppressors and the Greek clergy. Thus, Paisiy of Hilendar started a school of his own, whose most outstanding representative was Sofroniy Vrachanski, the author of the first published literary work "*Nedelnik*" (1806). In it Paisiy's ideals were continued along with the idea for the independence of the Bulgarian literature from the imposed Greek dogmas and canons.

Inspired by the Ukranian writer Yuriy Venelin's book as well as the ideas of the great Bulgarian teacher Petar Beron, in 1835 Vassil Aprilov founded the first secular school -the high school in Gabrovo, in which the teaching was conducted in Bulgarian language. The author of the first Bulgarian Grammar Book Neophit Rilski taught at the Gabrovo High School and trained many remarkable teachers there.

The struggle for independent Bulgarian church culminated in the middle of the nineteenth century. The first Bulgarian periodicals also date from that time. Newspapers and magazines were published by Hristo Danov, who sponsored many bright young students and opened a bookshop in Thessaloniki and Plovdiv. The time had come for a powerful historical figure to epitomise the cravings and ideals of a whole people. This was done by Georgi Rakovski (1824-1867) who in 1858 wrote "*Traveller in Woods*". This work of art was the first one to bear hints of the people's discontent and protest. The harbinger and the singer of the revolutionary movement was Dobri Chintulov (1822-1886) whose songs accompanied the rebels. The first patriotic plays were written by Dobri Voynikov (1833-1878) and some of them were later revised by Vassil Drumev (1841-1904). The first original talent in Bulgarian literature Petko Slaveykov (1827-1895) was both a publicist and a pedagogue. He was an extremely productive writer in almost all literary genres.

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Lyuben Karavelov (1835-1879) and Hristo Botev (1848-1876) were both fervent revolutionaries and colossi of Bulgarian poetry and prose. Hristo Botev who glorifies the craving to sacrifice one's life for one's people anticipated his own heroic death in a battle for his mothercountry.

The indisputable father of Bulgarian literature is Ivan Vazov (1850-1921). His masterpiece "*Under the Yoke*" narrates about the life and struggle of the Bulgarian people against the Turkish oppressors. In his later works he described the continuing struggle for independence and freedom as in the collection of epic poems "*Epopoe of the Forgotten*" (1881) which commemorates the heroes who died in the National Liberation movement. The classic of Bulgarian literature tried his hand in all literary genres from historical drama to poetry, prose and journalistic style.

Aleko Konstantinov (1863-1897) is one of the favourite Bulgarian writers famous for his travel notes and above all for his well-known novel "*Bay Ganyo*".

Other authors like Stoyan Mihailovski, Todor Vlaykov, Anton Strashimirov and Ellin Pelin wrote about the Bulgarian rural culture and lifestyle in a realistic way.

The Poetry of that period was represented by talented writers as Pencho Slaveykov (1866-1912) who concerned himself with the struggle for National Liberation, Peyo Yavorov (1877-1914) whose poetry and drama pictured the oppressed Bulgarian villagers and Dimcho Debelyanov (1887-1916) who stands out with his sensitivity and lyricism.

The new trends in Bulgarian literature were later formed under the influence of Symbolism and west European literature. Geo Milev was a most brilliant poet and translator of lyric poetry executed in the events in 1925.

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The neoromantic Yordan Yovkov devoted his literary work to the Bulgarian village.

The comedies of St.L.Kostov together with Angel Karaliychev's stories dealt with the social problems and castigated the vices of their times and the bourgeoisie.

The most prominent writers between the two World Wars were the so-called "revolutionary poets". Hristo Smirnenski (1898-1923) is one of the most outstanding representatives of socialist realism.

Nikola Y. Vaptsarov (1909- 1942) was a proletarian poet, shot in 1942 for his progressive beliefs and ideals. His "*Motor Songs*" are a brilliant collection of poems written with talent and sincerity. In 1952 he was posthumously awarded the International Prize for Literature by the International Peace Union.

Dimitar Dimov who wrote the novel "*Tobacco*", Dimitar Talev and Georgi Karaslavov are only a few of the post-World War II generation of writers.

The Bulgarian literary works have been translated into over 23 languages and popular in many corners of the world.



## CULTURAL LIFE

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Bulgaria is known for its talented artists who spread Bulgarian art far beyond the country's boundaries. Bulgarian opera singers as Gena Dimitrova, Nikolai Gyaurov, Nikola Gyuzelev, Boris Hristov, Anna Tomova-Sintova, Alexandrina Milcheva have performed with all the world-famous Opera companies and conductors. Artists exhibit in all corners of the world and are most highly praised by the critics. Theatres and concert halls not only in the capital but in all the major cities seat the numerous lovers of art.

There is a wide choice of how to spend a night with Bulgarian art.

There are at least three most popular and beloved places for tourists to go: the stately building of the National Palace of Culture which may seat thousands of spectators, the auditorium "Bulgaria" which is within walking distance from the National Theatre "Ivan Vazov" and has excellent acoustics, and the National Opera House. Smaller halls are also available for chamber and soloist performances. Among the most popular orchestras and choirs are "The Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices", the national choir "Svetoslav Obretenov" and the choirs of the National Opera Theatre, the National Bulgarian Radio and the Alexander Nevski Cathedral.

Plovdiv, Varna and Rousse have their city opera companies and symphonic orchestras of first-class professional musicians and singers.

The National Opera Theatre includes in its rep-

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ertoire works of Bulgarian, Russian, Italian, French and other composers.

Visiting a concert, an opera or ballet performance does not involve any language barriers for the aesthetic perception. Attempts have been made not only to sing in the original but also to stage plays in foreign languages.



## RELIGION

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In the 14th and 15th centuries today's Bulgarian territory was geographically situated at the border between the western and eastern parts of the Roman Empire. This fact had predetermined the religious orientation of the country.

In 342 in Serdica (nowadays Sofia) a Council of Bishops was convened aimed at a peaceful consolidation between the western and eastern parts of the Empire. Little lands are known to undergo such enormous migrations from pre-historic times till the end of the Middle Ages. Owing to these migrations Christian communities survived only in isolated places. The majority of the conquerors in the 6th century was comprised by the Slavs. In the 7th century the Proto-Bulgarians crossed the Danube led by Khan Asparuh and founded the state called Bulgaria. Apparently the Slavs did not give a hostile reception to them. On the contrary, they united with them in the struggle against the Byzantine invasions. No conversion was possible at that time. The West was on the decline and the Latin missionaries were completely devoted to the christening of the Germanic people. Even when Byzantine missionaries did arrive in Bulgaria, they were not welcomed because of the constant wars between the Empire and the Bulgarians. The situation was, however, radically changed towards the middle of the 9th century when social and political factors favoured and facilitated the spreading of Christianity. The far-sighted and prudent Tsar Boris I realised that if his people remained unchristened it would result in isolation from the great powers. The Conversion, on the other hand, would strengthen

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his power as a tsar and would make him equal to a prince , e.g. God chosen.

Thus, in 865 Tsar Boris I was baptised by a Greek missionary. His example was followed by the ordinary people in spite of the two rebellions of the aristocracy which were put out overnight.

After the Orthodox religion had been adopted by the Bulgarian people, it was rooted deeply in its lifestyle and culture. Its first most significant result was the acceleration and completion of the process of merging between Proto-Bulgarians and Slavs.

The predominant religion in Bulgaria nowadays remains to be *the Orthodox religion*. Although it has preserved the Orthodox church structure and discipline, it has autonomous church government and administrates its church life independently. The Patriarch is at the head of the Bulgarian Church who together with the the Synod of Archbishops exercises the supreme power. According to Orthodox church canons the archbishops, once elected by the congregation, occupy this position for life. Neither can they be re-appointed to another bishopry, except in case of promotion as Patriarchs. Every diocese is divided into a certain number of parishes. Every parish is headed by a clergyman who has the right to get married and the economic issues are settled by secular clerks. The clergy also avail themselves of the system of social welfare.

The majority of the Bulgarian population today profess the Greek Orthodox faith and few Bulgarians profess other Christian or other religions. There are *Catholics, Armenians, Protestants*, but their number is insignificant. There are also followers of the *Methodist, Baptist, Congregational*, etc. churches.

Before the beginning of the World War II there

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were about 60 000 *Jews* in Bulgaria. Thanks to the efforts of the authorities and the whole Bulgarian nation they were saved from the fate of their compatriots living in countries occupied by the Nazis. After the foundation of Israel, 90% of the Bulgarian Jews emigrated to their mothercountry. Synagogues can be seen in Sofia, Plovdiv, Rousse, etc.

Islam in Bulgaria is felt to be a direct outcome of the Ottoman domination. *The Moslems* form the hugest religious group after the Christians. From ethnical aspect they are divided into three groups :

- compact *Turkish* population inhabiting the districts of Shoumen, Razgrad, Kurdjali, Haskovo
- the *Gypsies* living in small groups all over the country's territory
- Bulgarian *Mohammedans* who were forced to be converted in the Islam during the Turkish yoke. They inhabit mainly the Rhodopes.

All these religious communities are legal and peacefully co-exist with one another.



## **BULGARIAN ICONS**

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The Bulgarian icon has a history of over a thousand years. In the crypt of Alexander Nevski Cathedral the historical development of this typically Slavic art may be traced. In Bulgaria, however, it reaches its brilliant climax. One can see it in almost every Bulgarian museum and church.

Bulgarian icons are usually painted on a flat lime-tree or cypress board covered with a layer of glue and plaster, on top of which there is sometimes a piece of cloth soaked in alabaster. The icon-painters used natural colour powders dissolved in water and egg yolk and then fixed them with a protecting polish containing linseed and tar. Some of the icons were partially covered with a layer of metal causing the face expressions and hands of the saints to stand out.

Unlike the murals, the icon does not fulfill decorative functions. Neither is it illustrative by nature. On the contrary, it serves as an object of cult. It is created as an evidence of God's omnipotence and shelter for the prayers of the Christians.

Thus the icon was a way of communication between people and God. The most common images portrayed on icons were those of Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary and various scenes and saints from the Bible.

Every Bulgarian church cherishes the icon of the saint whose name it bears. It may have decorative functions at the iconostasis which replaced the former low barrier for the choir and had undergone changes in height since the beginning of the 14th century. The iconostasis formed a thin barrier between the frontal part of the temple and its altar.

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The oldest Bulgarian icons were made of ceramics and originated in the monasteries around Preslav. They date back to the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. Veliko Turnovo inherited this art and iconography flourished in that region. At the beginning, the faces of the saints were depicted according to strict canons and had modest and enduring expressions. Later, in the 13th century they acquired milder and milder traits. In the 14th century the saints were adorned with valuables.

The Ottoman invasion hindered iconography at first but the art was revived in the 15th and 16th centuries.

It was in the 18th century when the western influence began to be felt with the Baroque in particular. The canons for beauty were changed; the pale ascetics with unexpressive features gave way to more lively figures painted in fresher and brighter colours and greater detail. Different schools of iconography were formed. For example, the Samokov School gave preference to less realistic figures, painted in full grandeur and bright colours. The Tryavna and Bansko Schools introduced landscape and nature. In the 19th century more icons were produced by hand but the saints were little animate.

With the advance of technology the icons started to be produced by means of patterns.

The Bulgarian icon has witnessed historical changes and turnovers of a whole nation. Iconography has been developed for over 10 centuries now and Bulgarian icon exhibitions enjoy enormous interest and success in Paris, London, Moscow, Tokyo, etc.

They may be found in museums and national galleries where they give evidence for cultural belonging and Orthodox artistic talent.

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## BULGARIAN MONASTERIES

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It is impossible to understand the history and nature of Bulgarian monasteries, their place in the nation's consciousness without knowing more of the historic fate of the nation itself. Ever since they came into existence, monasteries in Bulgaria were something more than just ecclesiastical formations or sheltered places for escaping from worldly life, and for religious ecstasy.

The establishment of Christianity in Bulgarian during the 9th century represented in fact the establishment of Bulgaria herself. Firstly, at home, as a spiritual and cultural entity; secondly: among the great European claimants to authority, glory and power. Monasteries, too, were amongst the means toward the objectives but they were means in the service of philosophers, writers and philologists. Not simply a religion, but a whole culture was to be forged behind the monastery walls. It turned later into a self-confidence capable of preserving the substance of a nation in the course of five centuries of foreign rule.

The 120 monasteries preserved to this day are a living chronicle of Bulgaria's culture, creative spirit and national consciousness. They have been, and will be, a part of her thinking and of her mentality.

### THE RILA MONASTERY

The introduction to the Rila Monastery could well start with the words of the first Bulgarian historian Paissii of Hilendar, recorded in 1762 in his *Slav-Bulgarian History*:

"Of all the Bulgarian glory when there were so many large monasteries and churches in Bulgaria

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earlier, the Lord has left only the Rila Monastery to exist in our times... It is of great use to all Bulgarians. Therefore, it is the duty of all Bulgarians to guard it, and to give alms to the sacred Rila Monastery..."

The chronicle of this monastery reflects the entire history of the Bulgarian State and the Bulgarian people, the defence of their spiritual and cultural nature.

The monastery was founded by *John of Rila* in the 10th century as a colony for hermits. Later it became one of the centres of early mediaeval culture. It declined during the 11th century but with

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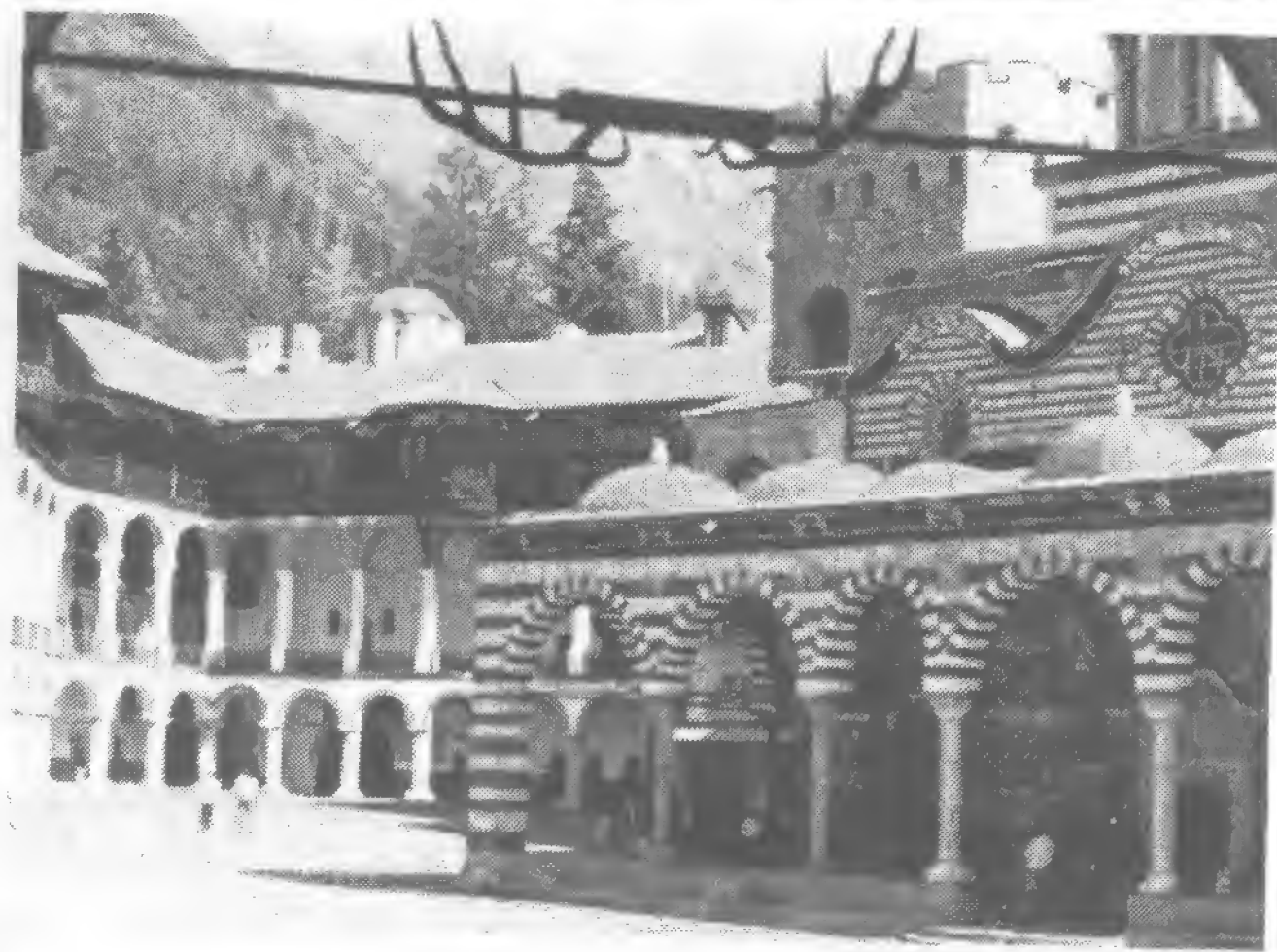
the foundation of the Second Bulgarian State great care was taken of it. The vicissitudes of time forced its location to be changed on several occasions. It has been destroyed by fire, and abandoned by the monks. Its present-day place, 119 km south to Sofia is the one in which it stood during the 14th century when the protosebast *Dragovol Hrelyo* settled in the monastery as an independent ruler. In 1335 he built the five-storey defence tower topped by the Transfiguration Chapel, fragment of whose murals can still be seen today. By the end of the 14th century the Rila Monastery had turned into a powerful feudal entity with many villages, lands and properties (Tsar Shishman alone, the last Bulgarian ruler donated it over twenty villages in different districts).

The monastery's unquestionable authority influenced the Turkish sultans who confirmed the rights granted by the Bulgarian kings by special firmans. Irrespective of this, the Monastery was devastated around the mid-15th century. It started rising again after the relics of John of Rila were brought from Veliko Turnovo here in 1469 (passing through the whole of Bulgaria as a nation-wide patriotic procession). The fate of the Monastery became the concern of the entire Bulgarian nation.

A new centre was needed for the cultural life, which had declined or was transferred abroad. Many of the time's most outstanding men of letters gradually started gathering in the monasteries. The first links with Russian monasteries were established. A charter of Tzar Ivan the Terrible, kept today at the Monastery Museum allowed the Rila monks unlimited access to the Moscow Principality.

The Rila Monastery was burned and pillaged on several occasions. The construction of the present-day monastery buildings which stretched over 30 years started in 1816, with means collected by the

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entire people. The courtyard facades offer one of the most perfect use of the verandas system which in contrast to their original use on Mt. Athos, lent very much warmth and cosiness to the place.

The large monastery kitchens are located in the northern wing and are unique example of building and architecture: a 24-metre cone passing through all floors by means of ten rows of arches topped by a small cupola.

The Holy Virgin main church was built from 1834 to 1837 in the place of the old burned-down church. It is a combination of the old three-nave basilicas with the cruciform churches of Mt. Athos and the Italian cupola churches (all these types were known to the Rila monks who provided the master with a complete construction plan). Normal church size was enlarged by the three apses, two galleries and two chapels.

The interior is extremely impressive. The murals were painted between 1840 and 1848 by some of the finest artists of the time: *Ivan Nikolov The Iconpainter, Kosta Valyov, Zahari Zograph, Dimiter Zograph and his sons* - all from Samokov, *Dimiter*

*Mollerov* from Bansko and his son *Simeon*. The icons of the main altar were painted by *Ivan Obrazopissov* from Samokov. The twenty donors' portraits in the church mark the beginning of Bulgarian secular painting, of realistic portraits.

Thus the Rila Holy Virgin Church became an example of the new trend which revived 19th century religious painting. This gallery of art was enriched by the murals in the churches and chapels outside the monastery: St. Lucas, Virgin's Shroud, The Assumption of St. John of Rila - above his grave, the church of the Orlitsa cloister, and the graveyard church. Some of them feature another two of the main individual styles of the time: of Toma Vishanov and Nikola Obrasopissov, founder of the Bulgarian genre painting:

Thirty six figural scenes, the figures of the Old Testament Kings, apostles martyrs, an exceptionally rich ornamentation of flowers, birds and stylised figures - this, in short, is the "subject matter" of the main carved altar of the Holy Virgin Church fashioned by four masters over a period of five years.

Stunningly carved is the entrance gate of the already existing church of Protosebast Hrelyo, preserved today in the Monastery's Museum of history. The museum also contains a multitude of gold and silver church plates, collections of coins, weapons, jewellery, gold-weave materials and embroidery. A truly unique masterpiece is the carved cross of the Monk Raphael worked over a period of twelve years. The library's 16 000 volumes include 134 manuscripts from the 15th to 19th century, numerous incunabula and documents. The donations received from all parts of the country do, in fact, represent a very rich ethnographic collection of works of art and crafts. Retaining the names of those donors and the exact date of donation, they

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represent an original chronicle of the national consciousness, of those pure patriotic feelings and hopes which were inspired throughout centuries in every Bulgarian by the Rila Monastery - the country's largest spiritual and cultural temple.

### THE BACHKOVO MONASTERY

The Bachkovo monastery erected in a magnificent locality along the reaches of the Assenitsa river ( 29 km south of Plovdiv) ranks second after the Rila monastery both with regard to size and to architectural, artistic and literary significance.

Its history was a turbulent one. It was founded by the Georgian *Grigorii Bakuriani* in 1083. A special decree stipulated that it was to be self-governing body inhabited by some 50 Georgian monks at the most. Almost immediately after its foundation the monastery turned into a wealthy landowner, its properties stretching as far as Salonika.

In 1344 Tsar Ivan Alexander established his rule over the Rhodopes, populated the monastery with Bulgarians and generously donated to it. His full-length portrait stands next to the figures of Bakuriani and his brother Apasii in the narthex of the upper floor of the ossuary - the only building remaining from mediaeval monastery after its destruction in the 16th century, standing alone in the woods today, apart from the new "complex".

The monastery's biography is inevitably reflected in the architectural face of the ossuary. Its general idea is foreign to old Bulgarian art, and is clearly influenced by Syrian and Armenian-Georgian building. At the same time, the construction of parallel rows of stones and bricks was unknown there and that is the construction method of Pliska and Preslav. The preserved murals on two floors are a valuable document of an age that has left us with fairly few artistic testimonies.

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Painted during the 11th and 12th centuries, in all likelihood by two artists, the murals are the fruit of an aristocratic art, of the monumental-spiritualistic style of the time when the theocratic system of



Byzantine was most powerful: stern and absorbed figures, foreign to all worldly things, forceful and severe drawing, enamel gleaming colour.

Spared during the first wave of enslavement, Bachkovo Monastery became the “prison” of the last Bulgarian patriarch Euthymius, who was exiled there, where he continued his great literary work. The wave of Mohammedanization destroyed the monastery but by the end of the 16th century it was fully restored. The large refectory was built in 1601, the main church of the Assumption - in 1604. Thanks to the special benevolence of the Greek Patriarchate the church became the only monumental (12 x 22 m, cruciform, three-aspides) cultic building in Bulgarian lands prior to the National Revival period. The figures depicted in the church's first murals (1643), probably the work of Athos painters, stand apart from the then prevailing demo-

cratic artistic trend; they are characterised by solidity, immobility and schematism. An interesting proof of the cultural level of the monastic brotherhood are the murals in the refectory displaying the upright figures of the ancient philosophers Aristoteles, Aristophanes, Diogenes, David, Sophocles and Anaximenes.

Bachkovo monastery was one of the most significant spiritual and literary centres of the National Revival period. It was a frequent venue of mass pilgrimages. In 1837 the decision was taken for a new church to be built: St. Nikola, which entered the annals of Bulgarian art. Its murals, completed in 1840 were the first documented work of the great National Revival artist Zahari Zograph. This is where you will find the first true genre compositions of the Bulgarian artists: above the heavenly regions of Doomsday, the first true genre compositions and realistic landscapes, the first paintings with a frank social content (the presentation of Plovdiv's notables among the sinners in hell) influenced by concrete topical reasons (for example, the refusal of these notables to open a Bulgarian school in their town).

The murals, old icons from different periods, the manuscripts and incunabula with artistic facings, as well as the many objects linked with church crafts turned Bachkovo Monastery into one of the richest galleries of old Bulgarian art.

### **THE TROYAN MONASTERY**

The Troyan Monastery is known above all for the creative work of Zahari Zograph who painted both the exterior and the interior (a rare practice for the time) of the main church built in 1835, 7 km from the town of Troyan. It is a fine example of the impact of the popular conception of the world and the influence of housing architecture on

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religious construction. Here Zahari Zograph repeated the social and moral “experiments” in religious painting (the compositions *Doomsday* and the *Wheel of Life*), left his second self-portrait signed with amazing self-confidence in spite of the Ottoman bondage, and painted the figures of Bulgarian and Russian saints. Besides, he painted a completely secular group portrait of the monastic brotherhood in the refectory - something highly unusual for the time.

A chronicle dates back the foundation of the monastery in the year 1600; nothing but the throne stone of the church remains from that time. The Troyan Monastery belongs completely to the Bulgarian National Revival period. Eminent men of letters worked here during the mid-18th century and a School was also founded. The patriotic mission turned into a tradition. In 1872 Vassil Levski set up here a secret revolutionary committee which was joined by all the monks headed by the Father Superior Macarius. Four years later the monastery became a citadel of the 1876 April Uprising.

Fortunately most of the great works of old and National Revival art have survived. The iconostasis of the main church made in 1839 is a masterpiece of woodcarving. Amazing in its originality is the much earlier (1794) carving of the holy altar gates in St. Nikola Chapel. The icons introduce us once again to the best known National Revival artists: the Samokovians Dimiter Zograph and Nikola Obrasopissov, Triavna's Simeon Tsonyuv, Dossyu Koyuv, Koyu Tsenyuv, Theodossius Koyuv Vitanov. Particularly valuable among the multitude of manuscripts and incunabula are the so-called Troyan Homilies of the 17th century. The monastery's “printery” in which fine graphic works, including many landscapes were made, was widely known.

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## THE ROZHEN MONASTERY

Rozhen Monastery, situated far to the south in the Pirin area, 6 km from Melnik is the only monastery restored during the first centuries of Ottoman rule which has survived to this day. The present-day appearance of this old monastery (built by the Melnik ruler, despot Slav during the 12th and 13th century) dates back to the 16th century. According to one inscription the image of Christ Pantocrator together with the twelve apostles above the entrance gate of the Holy Virgin main church was painted in 1597. Valuable monuments of 17th century painting included in the external southern





wall (Doomsday, Jacob's Ladder), dated with inscription from 1611, as well as scenes from the life of John the Baptist painted in 1622 in the ossuary. The inside walls in the naos, the narthex and chapel of the main church were painted in 1732 with a strong inclination for narration as a result of which more than 150 subject-matters were illustrated. The abundance of figures of monks and hermits unknown anywhere else, many of them probably historic personages, contemporaries of the unknown painter is also typical.

Rozhen Monastery owes its fame above all to its carved iconostases and lecterns. Some of them are extremely complicated compositions, both in intent and in actual execution in which Biblical themes have given full scope of boundless imagination which reached the peaks of decorativeness.

Rozhen monastery has left us with a treasure in yet another art: that of calligraphy. A unique work of the calligraphic school which existed here as early as in the 14th century is the manuscript "Interpretation of Jonah", taken in 1674 from the Constantinople Patriarch Dositheism, and kept today in the Holy Grave Church in Jerusalem.

### **THE ALADJA ROCK MONASTERY**

A heritage of the wave of Hesychasm is the Aladja Rock Monastery above Golden Sands resort (14 km from Varna). Hermits inhabited the monastery until the 18th century. It is assumed that they came here in the early spread of Christianity during the 4th century.

The "architecture" of Aladja Monastery is quite complicated. Two floors have been hewn into the calcareous rock linked by a wooden staircase "mounted" in a cylindrical groove. The lower floor contains the church (11 m long; 7 m wide and 2 m high), several rooms and cells; the second floor

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contains a chapel and other small cells. Little remains of the murals in the church and the chapel. Painted probably during the 14th century, they belong to the Turnovo school.

Another similar monastery complex is hewn into the same rock, some distance away.



### **THE ZEMEN MONASTERY**

Completely different from both the official Byzantine style and the other official Turnovo School are the architecture and painting of the Zemen Monastery, founded during the 14th century. It is located above the Strouma river, 76 km south-west of Sofia. According to a donor's inscription in the St. John the Theologian Church in 1354, the ruler of the Velbuzhd Principality, Despot Deyan enlarged the church of the already existing monastery, decorating it with murals. A solid stone building, it was the only one to survive the monastery's ravaging and depopulation after Bulgaria's subjection to Ottoman rule. It was not restored until the 19th century.

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The builders probably changed the entire exterior of the church in keeping with their ideas and tastes. Such as it remains today, the Zemen church is an absolute exception to the whole of Bulgaria's mediaeval architecture: a cubic building with three semi-circular apses with equal height, reaching up to the roof cornice which unites them in a single group. The roof - a four wall squashed pyramid with a cupola atop a cylindrical drum, decorated by two rows of blind arches - is unique in the entire Balkan Peninsula. The facades which are broken up only plastically - by means of blind arches and lacking colour effects - complete the harsh original appearance. A strange blend is achieved with the impact of the inside murals - also harsh, somewhat crude, as if deliberately archaic.

With few parallels in contemporary painting, they continued the traditions of the pre-iconoclastic period in the East Orthodox art. Archaism is visible both in the themes of the religious scenes and in the means of portrayal, the presentation of architectural decors, the use of light and space. The colours are saturated and strong, lacking nuances; the figures, the folds of the garments, the ovals and features of the slightly individualised faces are outlined with thick, hard colours. The aim was to create a solid and down-to-earth image - the Biblical heroes are calm and strong persons, alien to either ecstasy or asceticism. The only exception is the figure of John of Rila, one of the earliest portraits of the saint.

The portraits of donors Despot Deyan and his wife are considerably individualised, hinting at drawing from nature. A similar trend is observed only in the portraits of Sebastocrator Kaloyan and his wife Desislava in the Boyana Church (1259). The face of the ruler's wife has a kind of simple living beauty, and elements of folk embroidery are

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depicted on the headcloth showing below her crown. The Zemen master also had a particular weakness for folk-style details which he skilfully depicted.

Finally, as a vivid proof of his imagination, creative freedom and striving for originality is the scene "Forging of the Nails" which does not exist in gospel texts or in painting - Bulgarian or foreign, not even in apocrypha. It is the fruit of the imagination of the Zemen artist alone.

All this makes the monastery a rare monument of original mediaeval folk art, of that marked trend in religious painting which Andrei Grabar called "democratic trend".

### THE KILIFAREVO MONASTERY

The Kilifarevo Monastery has gone down in the annals of Bulgarian history as the "Second University of Mediaeval Bulgaria" following that of Clement of Ochrida's large School in Ochrida. It was founded between 1348 and 1350 upon the order of Tsar Ivan Alexander, 12 km south of Turnovo, for the purpose of providing shelter for the Hesychast and hermit Theodossius of Turnovo, a man of letters and enlightener roaming the Bulgarian lands at the time. The monastery soon gathered writers, philologists, translators and calligraphers alongside with clergymen who spread Hesychasm, theologians and philosophers. Liturgical books and Byzantine chronicles were translated, volumes were compiled of the lives of Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek saints, and sermons were written against the different numerous heresies. The Hesychastic principle that "the word is identical with the substance" was brilliantly realised in the perfect language form and the accurate translation, a skill which the biographer of Theodossius of Turnovo, the Byzantine Patriarch Calyst, was later to call a "divine gift".

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The culture and the depth of knowledge of these men of letters were remarkable: in their works they freely quoted Thucydides, Plato, Homer and Aristoteles. Here studied Cyprianus, the future Metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia, an off-spring of the Turnovo boyar family of Tsamblak, who reformed the Russian liturgical texts. The author of this reform - Euthymius, Theodossius of Turnovo's closest disciple - also worked there.

Destroyed during the onslaught of the Ottomans, the monastery was not restored until 1718. This is when the small Birth of Christ Church and the two chapels of John of Rila and of Theodossius of Turnovo were built. In 1840, the monks called Kolyo Ficheto who restructured and enlarged the church (retaining only the altar wall and the two chapels) and raised the present-day spacious, although single-nave domed church. Its rectangular plan distinguishes it from all other monastery churches of the time. Although more restrained and somewhat sterner than in some of his other works, the great master has attained an elegant external appearance with sparse decorations of blind two-step bays and a typically National Revival decorative frieze reminiscent of woodcarving.

Some of the murals in the old chapel of Theodossius of Turnovo have been preserved, providing an interesting document of 18th century art. One feels the freedom and confidence with which the unknown master worked, his sense of movement and the skill to convey the inner state of this movement through the position of the figures. Adapting himself to the small size and peculiar construction of the interior (without a northern wall), he allowed himself to upset the accepted chronology of the Biblical scenes.

The most remarkable work of art here is again the chapel: the old carved iconostasis, probably



the work of Triavna masters, fashioned with great imagination, seen above all in the figures of mythical monsters and beasts, with great sculptural talent, manifesting at the same time a perfect measure for decorativeness. Icons of some of the finest masters of the Triavna School are preserved in the church and chapels. The famous icon of the life of John of Rila is also kept there.

Kilifarevo Monastery, repeatedly restored and reconstructed, has a complete harmonious appearance, blending with the environment, which ranks it among the finest architectural ensembles of the Bulgarian National Revival period.

### **THE DRIANOVO MONASTERY**

Living strongly in the national consciousness of every Bulgarian is the heroic and tragic destiny of the Drianovo Monastery. In existence as early as in the Second Bulgarian State, it was subsequently destroyed and re-built on two occasions. It was restored in its present location - in the Drianov





River gorge, 4 km away from the town of Drianovo - in 1845. During their tours of Veliko Turnovo district, Vassil Levski and Matei Preobrazhenski chose it as one of the main bases of the revolutionary organisation. During the 1876 April Uprising, Priest Hariton from the Transfiguration Monastery, the uprising's military commander in the area and the teacher and poet Bacho Kiro Petrov, headed an armed detachment of 200 men who, pursued by the enemy, found shelter behind the walls of Drianovo Monastery. Throughout nine days they engaged in fierce battle before being crushed: the insurgents and monks were killed, the monastery burned to the ground. Only a part of the large stone church was spared.

Relics of the April epopee are preserved in the monastery museum today, along with some valuable icons.

### **THE KAPINOVO MONASTERY**

The church of the Kapinovo monastery, near the town of Elena, features an inscription of the year of its foundation on the cornice above the altar: 1272, under Konstantine the Quiet's rule. Following repeated destructions and restorations of the monastery, the church was built in 1835 by two self-taught masters from Drianovo. There is little to distinguish the single-nave, domeless building; the murals however include some of the most remarkable compositions in the Bulgarian religious painting on the theme of Doomsday painted in 1845 by Joan Popovich from Razgrad, an artist not belonging to any school. It is quite rare for one to see a scene with so many participants, with such an exhaustive representation of the entire scriptural "personage", and with such detailed tracing of the theme and its elements.

On the comparatively small western entrance

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wall, the artist has manifested amazing composition skill, great imagination, inventiveness and personal interpretation. The dead rising from the graves, the poses and gestures of the sinners dragged by the Blazing River to Hell, depicted as a dragon, is reminiscent of the apocalyptic vision of Toma Vishanov from Bansko, insubordinate to the strict canons of pictorial art.



The present-day massive two-storey buildings were built in 1856. The outside walls are 1.5 m thick; their height which follows the natural curves of the ground exceed 8 m in places. This is an eloquent illustration of one of the construction principles of the Bulgarian National Revival period: resembling a mediaeval fortress from altar, from the inside the Kapinovo Monastery is picturesquely broken up and beautified with verandas, eaves and staircases which serve to create a homely cosiness. At the time of the construction, the impressive entrance gate was crowned with the figures of the Slav enlighteners Cyril and Methodius. Later on, the portraits of the two donors were painted, with an inscription of gratitude, on the newly built chapel - The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.

The national spirit never died here. In 1794 the Father Superior of the monastery became one of the great enlighteners, the classic of National Re-

vival literature, Priest Stoiko Vladislavov, known later as Bishop Sophronius of Vratsa. He brought a copy of Paissii of Hilendar's Slav-Bulgarian History - a work which kindled the spark of national self-awareness. The "specialised" school for grammarians and priests, which was set up here in 1830, enjoyed great prestige.

### THE CHEREPISH MONASTERY

History links the name of Sophronius of Vratsa also with another monastery quite remote from the Kapinovo one - the Cherepish Monastery. Like all other Bulgarian monasteries it also rises above a river - the Iskar, more precisely in its pass through the Balkans. Sophronius of Vratsa hid here twice: 1798-1799. The future author of the first Bulgarian autobiographical novel probably did not choose Cherepish Monastery by accident: it possessed one of the richest libraries. Throughout centuries it was inhabited by men of letters, translators and calligraphers who have left us with such valuable works as the Cherepish Gospel of the 16th century, bound in 1612 with gold covers and depicting scriptural scenes; the Gospel of the Monk Danail, Jacob's Book of Apostles (both dating from the 17th century), and the Margarit collection of sermons and precepts compiled by Priest Todor of Vratsa in 1762.

The approximate date of the monastery's emergency is certified in writing: a deed recorded between 1390 and 1396 is kept today at Sofia's Church Historical and Archaeological Museum.

Some of the murals in the old church were possibly painted about the mid-19th century by Triavna artists, but are badly damaged. The loss is somewhat compensated by the skilfully carved iconostasis and bishop's throne.

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### **THE SHIPKA MONASTERY**

Part and parcel of our history is the Shipka Monastery, a symbol of an epoch-making event for Bulgaria - her Liberation from Ottoman rule, the final outcome of the 1877/78 Russo-Turkish War. The monastery, together with an impressive memorial church, was erected near the town of Shipka, near Kazanluk, below the famous Shipka Pass in the Balkan Range, where in the summer of 1877 the Russian troops and Bulgarian volunteers achieved the break-through which brought up the victorious outcome of the war. A year later, the All-Russian Committee headed by the mother of General Skobelev, Olga Nikolaevna, and Count N.P. Ignatiev, decided to build this church in memory of the historic victory. The means for its construction, which began in 1896 and was completed six years later were provided by the Russian and the Bulgarian people. The names of the Russian soldiers and Bulgarian volunteers who died near Shipka and Kazanluk, are carved onto 34 marble plates on the outer church wall.

Architect A.I. Tomishko is a representative of the so-called "Old Russian Trend" in architecture which revived the great Byzantine style in its Russian cathedral version of the 17th century. Similar examples of this architecture are the Russian Church and the Alexander Nevsky Memorial Church in Sofia. The Shipka Monastery is one of its exquisite, and at the same time monumental "editions". Solemn elegance is also emanated by the carved and gilded iconostasis made by the Russian architect Yagna. The altar icons were painted in the Russian monastery St. Pantheleimon in Mt. Athos, and were presented by its monks as a gift to the Shipka Monastery.

It stands by no means estranged in the overall panorama of Bulgarian monasteries. Just like them, it is more than a place of worship.

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## MINERAL WATERS AND BALNEOLOGY

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Bulgaria ranks among the first countries in Europe and the Mediterranean basin in thermal mineral water resources, well-known for their unique curative effect.

Balneotreatment dates as far back in Bulgarian history as 5th-4th millenium B.C. Many archaeological findings evidence the existence of hydrothermal centres in Hissarya, Sofia and Haskovo.

Balneolgy and climatotreatment had been practised by the Thracians who laid the foundations of balneotherapy. They used to build new prospering towns around the mineral water springs as *Plutalia* (Kyustendil), *Sedika* (Sofia), *Zherminea* (Sapareva Banya), etc. The Thracians deeply respected the deity of the mineral water springs which were considered to be the springs of good health, strength and beauty.

During the Roman Empire balneology flourished and new balneological centres were developed - *Augusta* (Hissarya), *Dessudava* (Sandanski), *Toansos* (the Sliven mineral baths), *Thermopolis* (the Bourgas mineral baths), etc. *Plutalia* and *Augusta* were among the chief balneological centres in the Roman Empire. Unfortunately, no remains of the Roman baths have been completely preserved through the centuries. They astonish with the original architectural solutions and construction techniques. Some of them have been used till the present day.

In the Middle Ages the most visited balneological centres were Hissarya, Sapareva Banya, Merichleri, Burshets. In translation the ancient name of

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Sandanski means Saint Healer and it was given to the city in memory of the two brothers Kozma and Damyan who had lived in these lands in the 10th century and cured people with different diseases.

*The mineral springs* in Bulgaria today are over 250 with a total debit of 28 000 l/sec. Almost three fourths of the mineral springs are warm, their temperature varying between 37 and 100° C. The rest of them are the so-called hypothermal springs with temperatures from 20 to 37°C. There are only a few cold water springs.

The Bulgarian mineral water springs are also characterized by specific chemical composition. In fact all kinds of mineral waters can be found in Bulgaria, with predominance of slightly mineral-



ised ones in all variations - silicon, sulphuric, fluorite, but also with a high concentration of mineral salts - carbonate, sulphate, chloric as well as carbon, hydrogen, iodine, rich in iron and arsenic.

*The mud* excavated from the sea bottom is also extremely curative for a great number of diseases. It can be found in considerable amounts in the salty lakes of Mandren and Atanassovo, not far from Bourgas, Pomorie, Shabla, Balchik - Touzlata and their total volume is estimated to 6 000 000 tons.

Around some of the balneological centres with water gushing straight from the ground sediments of curative mud have also been formed.

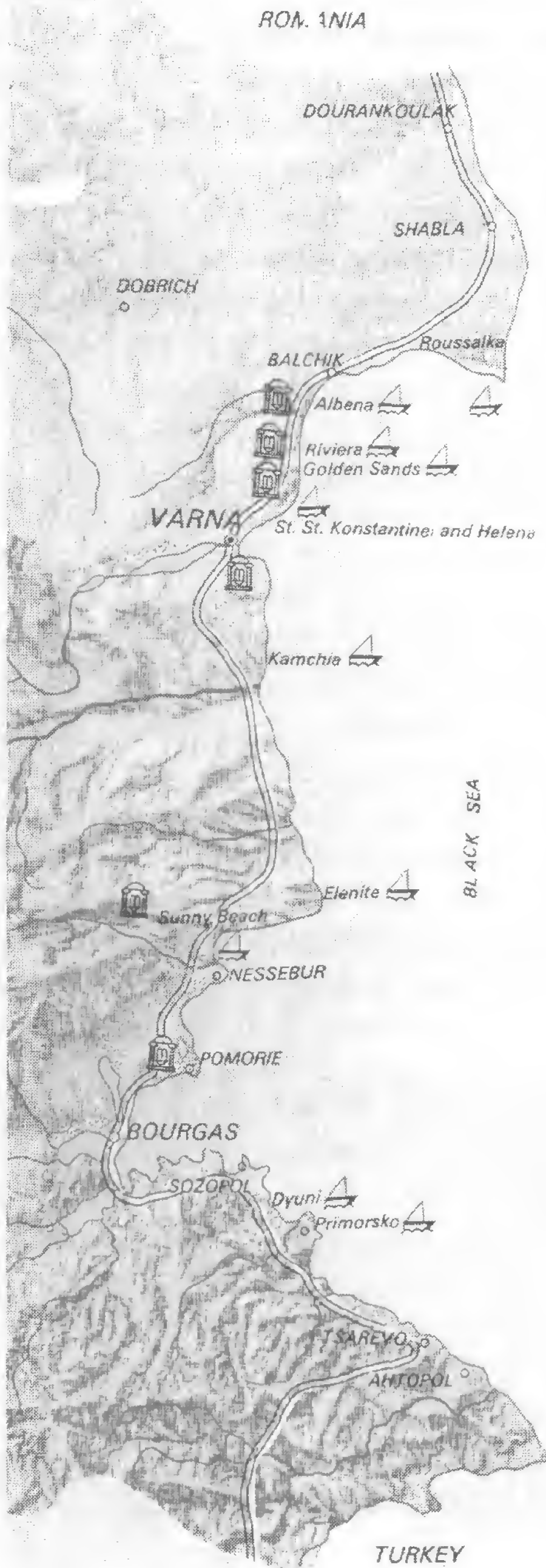
The variety of curative factors available in Bulgaria give many advantages for mineral water and mud treatment of different diseases, inflammations and complications of the skeleto-muscular, cardio-

vascular and respiratory systems, some occupational diseases, orthopaedic injuries and traumas, etc.

In addition, all Bulgarian balneological centres are located in regions with favourable climatic conditions both for therapy and prophylaxis.

*The Bulgarian Black Sea coast* is characterised by Mediterranean climate. During the hot summer months it is rarely cloudy or foggy, sunshine is exuberant and rich in ultra-violet sun rays which are so good for the skin. The sea breeze blows 80-90 days in summer. The daily summer temperatures range between 21 and 28°C from July to September. The atmospheric pressure is relatively high, consequently the concentration of oxygen in the air is also high. Sea water temperatures are comparatively high, too, which is good for ionisation. All these climatic factors contribute for the tourists' efficient recreation, prophylaxis, physiotherapy, balneotherapy, rehabilitation and treatment of various diseases. The hotel structure on which balneology is based has proved to be one of the best in the Balkan peninsula. The world-famous balneological centres are found in the resorts Albena, Golden Sands, St Constantine and Helena, Sunny Beach and Pomorie. They are equipped with modern medical apparatus and offer a choice of recreation programme. Highly qualified medical specialists monitor the patients throughout the course of treatment.

The spas situated in the mountains offer therapy, and prophylaxis all the year round especially for respiratory, lung, cardiovascular and endocrine diseases. To mention but a few of the largest ones Sandanski, Bansko, Narechen, Vurshets, Hissarya, the Sliven and Stara Zagora spas. *There you can not only recover but always keep in good health.*



## RESORTS

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Bulgarian *Black Sea coast* offers a sand strip which is 384 km in length and has many advantages. The Black Sea has no tides, its waters are not very salty (16%) and first-class resorts are scattered all along the coast. They are set in beautiful scenery, amongst luxurious verdure and have a peculiar and unforgettable air about them. The wide sand strip gradually descending towards the sea is famous for its fine sand, comparative shallowness at the beach, bright sun and its gentle pleasant breeze.

### **SUNNY BEACH** ( *Sluntshev bryag* )

The resort is perched at 36 km north of Bourgas and about 90 km to the south of Varna and is the largest holiday complex on the Black Sea coast. It numbers over 100 hotels, erected in long and wide lanes, surrounded by green and shady parks. It is naturally set in a small bay, protected by the slopes of the Balkan Mountain to the north. Its six-kilometer-long beaches reach as far as Nessebar to the south. The Mediterranean climate of the resort makes it preferable for family tourism. It of-





fers the whole spectre of services as well as plenty of entertainments for the children.

### **THE GOLDEN SANDS** ( *Zlatni Piassatzi* )

The Golden Sands is one of the most reputed Black Sea resort,s beloved for its rare combination of forest, sun and warm sea water. It is situated 17 km north-east of Varna.The fine golden sand beaches are 4 km long and 50-100 m wide. About 70 hotels are hidden in the wonderful greenery of the tourist complex. A winding road leads to the slopes of the Rock Monastery (Aladja Monastery) from where a fascinating view is open to the sea.

Along with the natural beauty of the setting, the Golden Sands is known for its typically national atmosphere created by the numerous restaurants in national style, the cosy cafes, shops, sports centres and places of entertainment. All these make the tourists' holidays a time for rest, recreation and exercise. The resorts is notorious for its lively night life in bars, discotheques and night clubs.





### ALBENA

The resort was built in late 1960s 32 km north of Varna and 15 km away from Golden Sands. Being comparatively newly-built it attracts the foreign tourists with the modern architecture of its 40 hotels, its serenity and quiet warm sea water which does not exceed 1.60 m at 100-200 m off the shore. The beach is 8 km in length and 100 m in width. Both children and adults are offered the best conditions for rest, sports exercises and entertainment.



### ST CONSTANTINE AND HELENA

This comparatively small resort is situated on the way between Varna and Golden Sands and is the oldest Black Sea tourist complex. With its spas, large oak, pine and beech parks it has been turned into a paradise for the visiting tourists. It offers quietness, fresh air and curative mineral water baths. It enjoys guests all the year round. Among the 20 hotels is the *Grand Hotel Varna* which is wonderfully furnished and equipped with a balneological centre, national style restaurants, taverns, bars and night clubs.

### **The RIVIERA** *Holiday Club*

It is situated just at the entrance of Golden Sands and numbers 6 hotels of which "The Imperial" is the top along the Black Sea coast. It is most suitable for congress tourism. Its natural setting and balneology are highly esteemed by the foreign guests.



### **The ROUSSALKA** *Holiday Village*

It is situated 40 km north of Albena and 15 km south of Cape Kaliacra. It consists of over 600 bungalows of luxury and comfort. A unique sports equipment is offered here along with an original and efficient diet, a wide selection of animation shows for tourists of all ages.

### **The DYUNI** *Tourist Village*

It is the most recently built tourist complex 40 km south of Bourgas in the vicinity of a huge beach. The buildings bear the typical features of Bulgarian architecture and mean accommodate 1 400 people.

### **The ELENITE Tourist Village**

It is located only 10 km away from Sunny Beach at the foot of the Balkan Range and houses 1 026 beds in luxury villas.



### *Mountain Resorts*

Bulgaria has long been known for its high mountains covered in thick snow, mountain tourism and winter sports.

### **BOROVETS**

Borovets is one of the most prestigious high-mountain resorts situated 1 300 m above the sea level on the northern slopes of the Rila Mountain amidst a hundred-year old pine forest. It is only 70 km away from Sofia. The ski runs start at 2 500 m and are wonderfully maintained. They are suitable for racing, slalom and ski jumping. The cabin lifts, drags and ski lifts are always kept in good repair. Borovets has been turned into a starting point for British and other mountain-climbers heading to Mussala (2 925 m) and many other mountain peaks with an altitude of over 2 500 m.

### **PAMPOROVO**

It is situated at an altitude of 1 650 m right in the middle of the Rhodopes. It is about 220 km away from Sofia and 84 km from Plovdiv. A wonderful pine forest and sunlit meadows surround the resort. The winter is long and mild, with plenty of sunshine and a pleasant breeze from the Aegean Sea. The ski runs are covered with snow December to May and are excellently maintained as well as equipped with drags and lifts. The 93-meter high television tower dominates top Snezhanka and has a fascinating panorama up to the Aegean Sea.

### **VTOSHA**

Vitosha is a national park in close vicinity with Sofia. The complex situated at 1 800 m consists of a number of hotels and offers ski-runs at 2 000 m and a rope-line.

### **BANSKO**

Bansko is a small town hidden in the eastern slopes of Pirin mountain. It is 160 km away from Sofia and is famous for its long sunny winter and excellent conditions for tourism.



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## ALPHABETICAL GUIDE

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### **ABRITUS**

- a historic reservation near the town of Razgrad. It was set as a Roman military camp in the 1st century A.D. in the vicinity of an ancient Thracian village. In 251, during a battle with the Goths the Roman emperor Decius was killed in this locality. Under the rule of *Constantine the Great* (306-337) and *Justinian the Great* (527-565) the village prospered. The Avars devastated and set it on fire in the end of the 2nd century. Later the Slavs and the Proto-Bulgarians restored its beauty and glory in 8th-9th century.

### **AHELOY**

- a small village 6 km to the south of Nessebar whose fame derives from the glorious victory of *Tsar Simeon the Great* over the Byzantine Emperor *Leon-Phocas* on August 2nd 917.

### **ALADJA MONASTERY**

- a rock monastery situated 14 km to the north-east of Varna and only 3 km to the west of the Golden Sands resort.

### **ALEPU**

- a quiet bay to the south of the Sozopol port. It is separated from the sea bed by a small sand strip. Its surroundings are recognised to be a reservation of diverse water species. The 5-kilometer long beach is scattered with picturesque sand dunes.

### **ALEXANDER NEVSKI Cathedral**

- a cathedral temple in the square of the same name right in the centre of Sofia. It was built between 1904 and 1912 in memory of the Russian soldiers who had perished in the wars for Bulgaria's

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Liberation from Ottoman domination in 1878. It is the largest cathedral in Bulgaria spread on an area of 3000 sq m, 52 m in height. There are 12 bells, of which the heaviest is 12 tons. Its cupola are gold-gilt. Visitors are impressed by the richness of shapes, architectural details, the volumetric decisions, the grandeur of the murals, mosaics and icons.

### **ARBANASSI**

- an ethnographic village situated 3 km to the north-east of Veliko Turnovo. It is considered to be a gem of the national architectural heritage, which attracts tourists from all over the world with its ancient houses dating back to the 16-17th centuries. The characteristic features of the buildings are the stone walls, the iron-barred windows and doors. The interior is richly decorated with valuable murals and iconostases ranging among the masterpieces of the Bulgarian craft of wood-carving. The old church "*Christ's Birth*" was built and painted in the 17th century. The church together with a great number of the houses are classified as monuments of national culture.

### **ASSENOVGRAD**

- is situated 19 km away from Plovdiv, at the foot of the Rhodope Mountain. It was founded in the Middle Ages as Stanimak. It is located close to a fortress, erected to protect the city which was an important commercial and strategic route between Plovdiv and the Aegean Sea. The city was destroyed by the Crusaders and restored under Tsar Ivan Assen II in 1231. Today only the remains of the Tower and a small church "*The Petrich Virgin*" witness its past glory. Owing to its key position Assenovgrad plays a major role in the economic development of the Rhodopes. The town prides itself in the famous cellars where one of the best red wines "Mavrud" is produced together with the unsurpassed dessert wine "Assenovgrad".

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## BALCHIK

- a port and a Black Sea resort situated 47 km to the north of Varna. One of the oldest towns founded along the Black Sea Coast. It was established by the Greek settlers in the 3rd century B.C. and was called Krunon, or, the town of springs because of the many water springs gushing forth to the west of the city. In the 2nd century *Krunnon* was renamed to *Dionissopolis*, e.g. the town of Dionysus to commemorate the divinity of wine and gayety. Since ancient times the town developed as a commercial center. Gold and silver coins were minted in it under Greek domination. Later, in Roman times, it was converted into a military base. Today's name *Balchik* originates from the name of a Bulgarian boyar Balik who governed in the vicinity in the 14th century. After the Liberation from Ottoman domination the town was in Bulgarian hands until 1913 when it fell under Roumanian rule to be regained in 1940.

The Palace of the Roumanian Queen Maria is situated 1,5 km from the town centre. It was designed by an Italian architect and was built in Oriental style. It used to be the Queen's summer residence.



The building consists of three storeys dominated by a minaret. The semi-European and semi-Oriental style complied with the Queen's religious beliefs who fought for the bringing together of Christianity and Islam. The remaining 18 buildings in Oriental style are scattered in the vast park with villas to accommodate guests.

The botanic gardens are decorated with columns, fountains, vaults and water-mills and in it over 600 rare plants are grown from all over the world. The park is streambed by white stone lanes which once used to be adorned with covers and carpets. A Cyprian iconostasis is exhibited in the chapel. Queen Maria and her daughter Illiana are also portrayed in it. In 1938 the Queen was lethally injured in Sinoya in the attempt to prevent her two sons from a duel. Her last wish on the deathbed was that her heart was buried in that small chapel, where it remained until 1940. At present the park is protected by the Bulgarian Academy of Science.

### **BANSKO**

- a small town, huddled in the eastern slopes of Pirin Mountain. It thrived economically and culturally in the 18th and 19th centuries when the secular and ecclesiastical buildings were erected. The ancient houses have preserved their resemblance to fortresses with thick walls and heavy gates. Today the town is developing as a wonderful winter resort.

### **BATAK**

- a historical place in western Rhodopes. During the April Uprising in 1876 nearly 3 000 citizens, children, old people and women included, were cruelly murdered by the Ottoman enslavers. In the stone church, the only witness of the tragedy, relics are kept commemorating heroes of the National Liberation movement.

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**BACHO KIRO**

- one of the oldest pre-historic caves in the country, situated 7 km south-west of Dryanovo in close vicinity with the Dryanovo Monastery. On the cave's surface layer remnants of the Neanderthal man have been discerned dating back to 70 000 years B.C. together with evidences from the Stone Age. At the bottom of the cave the soaked water has formed weird shapes in the stalactites and stalacmites.

**BELOGRADCHICKI SKALI**

*/Belogradchik Rocks/*

- a marvellous creation of nature near the town of Belogradchik, 150 km north of Sofia. Nature has sculptured most queer formations in the rocks resembling people, animals, chateaux and towers. This fairy-tail world is located at a height of 150 m over an area 30 km long and 3 km wide.

**BLAGOEVGRAD**

- the largest city in south-western Bulgaria is situated in the fertile valley of river Bistritsa. It was built at the site of a Thracian village and was named *Skaptopara*, which in translation means "a mountain market". Later the Romans settled, attracted by the curative qualities of the mineral springs. Under Turkish yoke the town remained a centre of craftsmanship and an enormous tobacco market. Nowadays Blagoevgrad is an industrial and cultural centre.

**BOZHENTSI**

- a village situated 18 km east of Gabrovo. It is a historical and archaeological reservation with beautiful houses built in the 19th century with typical heavy stone roofs, exquisite verandahs, ceilings and gates adorned with the skillful wood-carvings of the Tryavna School masters.

**BOYANA**

- a suburb of Sofia right at the foot of Vitosha. In its upper part the small Boyana Church is to be found, famous for its murals considered to be one of the magnificent creations of the 18th century art. The skillfulness and imagination of the artist marked an upsurge in the development of medieval Bulgarian painting. It trespassed the limits of the scholastic icon-painting and was no more devoted completely to church canons and dogmas at a time of absolute feudal and religious power.

**BOURGAS**

- the fifth biggest Bulgarian city. Its vicinities were populated by Thracians and Romans both of whom left long-standing traces in the town's history. Towards the end of the 17th century, fishermen from Pomorie and Sozopol settled along the banks of the Mandrensko Lake where plenty of fish could be caught. Later, Turkish fishermen made their appearance and, hand in hand with the Bulgarians, they dug three wells and called them "the Wells".

The development of the city began with the port building by the French company Batignol in 1903. Soon eighteen more foreign companies and big enterprises were started in Bourgas. The Huge Bulgarian Mills ground incessantly maize and wheat. The crops had a good market all around Europe.

The second largest Bulgarian port is hidden in a quiet bay which is the deepest along the sea coast.

Bourgas is an industrial centre developing ship-building, machine-building, wood processing, food and light industry, etc. The largest petrol refinery is to be found ten kilometers away from it.

The city is also famous for its lively cultural and tourist life.

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**CHERNO MORE** /*the Black Sea*/

- serves as a natural border on the east of the country. The coast strip is 384 km long. The overall sea area is 413 488 sq. km, or, it amounts to nearly 4 times the territory of Bulgaria. The average depth is 1245 m and reaches up to 2 245 m at places. In ancient times the Scythians named it "Akhaena", which meant "a gloomy sea" because of its dark colour and hues. The Greeks called it *Pontos Axinos*, or, "inhospitable sea" to refer to its frequent storms. Later, after the building of many convenient ports, they changed the name to "hospitable sea". The attribute "*black*" was given by the Slavs.

The Black Sea waters consist of two distinct layers. The upper layer is crossed by sweet-water currents flowing towards the Bosphorus and the salt concentration is little: 18 per 1 000 instead of 36 per 1 000 as in the Mediterranean. These waters contain magnesium, potassium and calcium salts, sulphates, bicarbonates, etc. which have a beneficial effect on the human organism. The lower layer, found below 200 m, is streamed by currents com-



ing from the Sea of Marmora. These waters contain hydrogen sulphides resulting from the decay of various organisms living in the upper layer under the action of anaerobic bacteria. There is no life at this depth. The vegetation and animal life are scarce in the Black Sea. Plankton is, however, abundant, especially on the surface where it sustains the life of a great many small fish, which are in greater number even than in the Mediterranean.

The following fish can be caught in the Black Sea : turbot, mackerel, anchovy, sardines, grey mullet, tunny as well as dolphins, mussels, shrimps, etc. There are no life-threatening fish in the Black Sea.

The seaside climate is mild, with average humidity and few cloudy days in July and August. The sea water is clear and rich in oxygen, with little algae and no tides. The golden sands are very fine and rich in curative salts.

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**DOBRICH**

- the largest city in the Dobrudja plain, 50 km north of Varna. It is now an agrarian, industrial and cultural centre. Since Ottoman times it has been a huge market town, from which fact its former name Bazardjik is derived. After the Liberation the town was named Dobrich after the boyar Dobrotitsa who governed Dobrudja in the 14th century.

**DOBRUDJA**

- a vast hilly plateau unfolding to the Danube in the north and the Black Sea in the east. It is known to be Bulgaria's grainery.

**DOUNAV** /*River Danube*/

- the second longest river in Europe after the Volga (2 850 km). Four hundred and seventy kilometers of the Danube serve as a natural border between Bulgaria and Roumania. The river is of permanent economic and tourist significance to the country.



**DRYANOVO**

- a town situated in the narrow valley of the Dryanovo river , at the foot of the Pre-Balkan Range, 24 km north-east from Gabrovo. It is the native town of Kolyo Ficheto - an eminent representative of the Revival period architecture. It attracts tourists with its mountainous climate and beautiful scenery. Four kilometers from the town are the Dryanovo Monastery and Bacho Kiro cave.

**DYAVOLSKA REKA** /*Devil's River*/

- a small picturesque river flowing into the Black Sea near Primorsko summer resort.

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**ELENA**

- a town not far from Veliko Turnovo, off the busy roads. It still breathes the air of the 18th and 19th centuries and has preserved its craftsman's nature.

**EMINE** (*cape*)

- is the point where the Balkan Mountain Range comes to an end. It divides Bulgaria into two parts Northern and Southern. The Cape rises 60 m above the sea and has abrupt rocks. The site is very windy and the sea is generally stormy at this place. The light-house is visible from a distance of 30 km. Next to it can be seen the excavations of the ancient Roman fortress Paleokastrum.

**ETARA**

- an ethnographic complex featuring Bulgarian history and crafts. It was built 8 km south of Gabrovo and the living museum presents typical regional

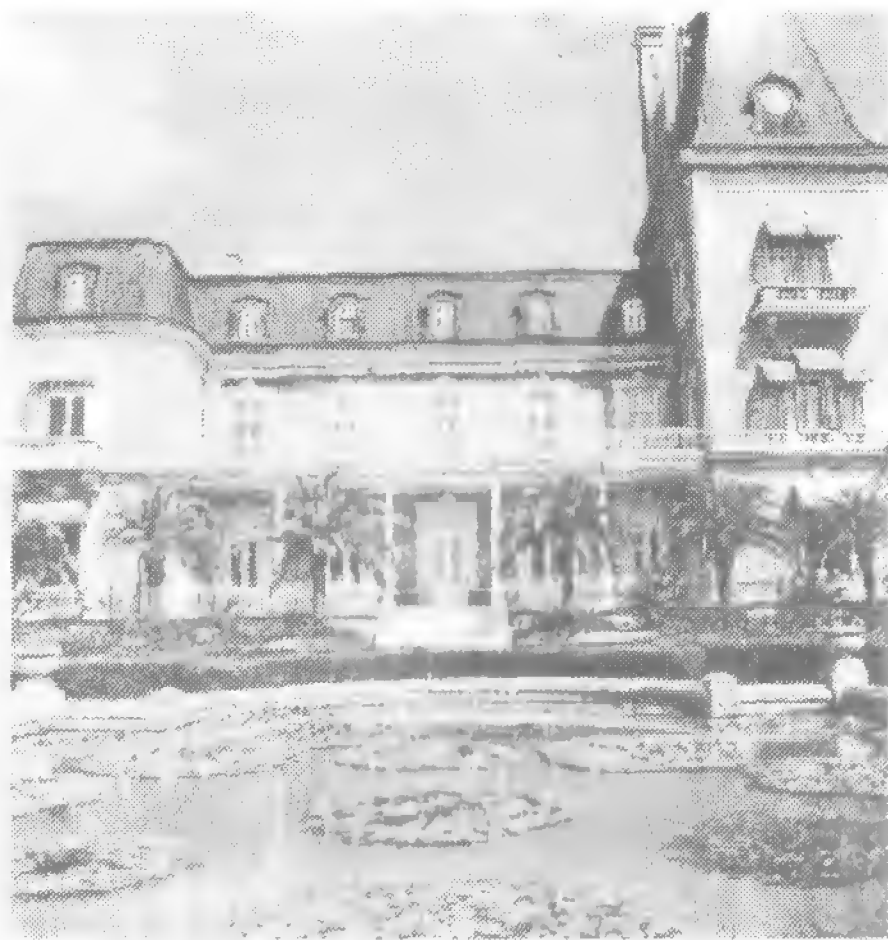




exhibits of the Revival period. The craftsmen's studios are equipped with authentic instruments for the arts of hammersmith's and goldsmith's, wood carving, cutlery, pottery, milliner's , knitting and fuller's. The uniqueness of this museum in the open air consists in the fact that the artisans produce objects and souvenirs in front of your eyes and you can buy them on the spot.

### **EUXINOGRAD**

- the palace is situated 8 km to the east of Varna. It was built in 1882 by an Austrian architect at the order of Prince Alexander Battenberg. The Palace was used as a summer residence by the last Bulgarian Tsars. Rare plants are grown in its spacious parks. In the surrounding vineyards the famous Euxinograd grapevines are grown from which the wonderful Euxinograd white wine and brandy are produced. The marvellous panorama open from the palace stretches from cape Emine to cape Kaliakra. Nowadays the Palace has been turned into a governmental residence.





## GABROVO

- is huddled in the picturesque defile of the river Yantra and is known as the "Bulgarian Manchester" for its textile factories and craftsmen's studios. The town was founded in the beginning of the 16th century and underwent fast development, facilitated by the river's waters. The town was pillaged by the Turks 1798 and remained uninhabited for some time. After its normal development had been resumed, Gabrovo exported its produce to Asia Minor, thus laying the foundations for its future undustrial development. The first spinning workshop was set up in 1882. The town had twenty-seven factories operating on the eve of the Balkan War. By the Nationalisation in 1949 their number had increased to 240. Nowadays Gabrovo is the main centre of Bulgarian textile and leather industries.

The town owes its charm and attractiveness to the fresh mountain air and the surrounding verdure. Its Palace of Humour and Joke had become the symbol of Gabrovo. There are many jokes and stories featuring the quick-wit and thrift of the Gabrovians. In the middle of river Yantra a monument has been erected to *Master Racho the Hammersmith* who is considered to be the founder of the city. He built his workshop in the shade of a huge hornbeam and, hence, the name of Gabrovo - the town of the hornbeam.

**GERGANINA TSHESHMA**

*/Gergana's Fountain/*

- a fountain from the time of the Ottoman domination, situated 2 km southeast of Harmanli. The legend tells that the fountain was built at the special order of the Grand Vizir in Constantinople to commemorate the beautiful Bulgarian girl Gergana who remained faithful to her fiance rejecting the Vizir's marriage proposal.

**GOVEDARTSI**

- a high-mountains resort situated in the eastern part of Rila at a height of 1 250 m, 83 km from Sofia. In its vicinity is the National Forest Reservation Gyulechitsa.

**GYESHEVO**

- a border check-point between Bulgaria and Macedonia, on the road from Kyustendil to Skopie.

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**HARMANLI**

- is situated 100 km to the south-east of Plovdiv and is the second largest silkworm-breeding centre in Bulgaria. It was founded in the 16th century and played an important role owing to its favourable geographical position on the way between Adrianople and Belgrade. Maritsa was a navigable river at that time and the Turks used to export corn for Constantinople by it. Harmanli was famous for its numerous mills and, hence, its name which derives from "threshing ground".

**HASKOVO**

- is situated 80 km easterly of Plovdiv and is a large tobacco-growing and tobacco-processing centre. It was established by the Turks towards the end of the 14th century and was ever since developed as an industrial town. The city centre has a somewhat Oriental air due to the elaborate fountains and mosques.

**HISSARYA**

- a small balneological town situated at the foot of Sredna Gora at an altitude of 365 m, 42 km north of Plovdiv. Since ancient times Hissarya has been famous for its thermal springs. The Romans turned the former Thracian village into a main resort where people from all over the Balkan peninsula, West Asia and the islands in the Aegean came for treatment. In the 4th century the town was engirdled by strong stone walls with battlements. Many interesting archeological findings are exhibited in the local museum.

Sixteen mineral springs gush forth in Hissarya at a temperature of 37-50°C.



## ISKAR

- a 368-kilometer-long river, the biggest tributary of the Danube on Bulgarian territory. The river crosses the Balkan Mountains and forms the Iskar Gorge which is 156 km long.

## IVANOVO

- a village situated 20 km to the south of Rousse. A great number of monasteries and rock churches were cut in the 13th and 14th centuries. The magnificent murals of Ivanovo are considered to be unique masterpieces marking the beginning of Renaissance in medieval Bulgaria.





**KAILAKA**

- a picturesque locality, situated 2 km away from Pleven. In ancient times it used to be a small village which later expanded into a Roman town, called Storgozia. It was devastated in the 5th century by the Barbarians and was later reconstructed by the Byzantines. Today Kailaka is a wonderful natural park spread on an area of over 1 600 acres. The ancient cave, which had been inhabited by primitive men, is now converted into an original restaurant.

**KALIAKRA**

- a cape, projecting strongly into the Black Sea. It is situated 16 km north-east of the town Kaliakra. The sea shore is protruded about 2 km into the sea, the vertical rocks rising up as high as 70 m. This place has been inhabited since Thracian times. Later in the Middle Ages it was given its present



name (from the Greek "Kali" meaning "*beautiful*" and "akra" meaning "*cape*"). Towards the end of the 14th century the feudal lords Dobrotitsa and Balik built a fortress which they called Kalaserka. Its foundations are still visible. In one of the caves an original museum with historic relics dating from the 3rd century B.C. to the 18th century A.D. is housed. A fascinating monument was erected to the memory of the forty young Bulgarian girls who chose to throw themselves in the sea rather than be cruelly murdered by the Turkish oppressors.

There is a small chapel "St Nikola" at the bottom of the cape. An original restaurant is situated in one of the caves.

### **KALOFER**

- a town situated in the famous Rose Valley, on the banks of the Tundja River. It was founded in the 14th century and prospered thereafter as a craftsman's village. The beautiful Bulgarian braidings are manufactured in the 1 200 workshops. This is the birthplace of the eminent Bulgarian poet and revolutionary *Hristo Botev* who perished for the Liberation of his fatherland in 1878.

### **KALOTINA**

- a border check-point with Serbia, 60 km to the west of Sofia.

### **KAMCHIA**

- a river flowing from Eastern Bulgaria into the Black Sea 34 km to the south of Varna. It is 245 km long and 4-5 m deep in its lower course. Its banks are spread over a vast marshland, known as *Longoza*, which abounds in thick virgin forest covering about 9 000 acres.

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**KAPITAN ANDREEVO**

- a border check-point with Turkey.

**KARDAM**

- a border check-point between Bulgarian and Roumania, situated on the way between Dobrich and Constance.

**KURDJALI**

- a town in the Rhodopes significant for its tobacco industry and the huge lead and zinc works. The town was established by the Turkish military commander *Kardji Ali* who gave his name to the settlement in the first years of Ottoman domination

**KARLOVO**

- a town situated on the southern slopes of the Balkan Mountain in the Rose Valley. It was founded in the 15th century and grew thereafter into a craftsman's, commercial and cultural centre, which owed its fame to the fine fabrics, jewellery and the rose oil it produced. It is the birthplace of many Bulgarian champions of the National Liberation and independence. The house of the Apostle of Bulgarian revolutionary movement *Vassil Levski* has been preserved and converted into a museum.

**KAVARNA**

- a town in North-Eastern Bulgaria. Initially it was a Thracian settlement, occupied by Greek colonizers in the 5th century. Later it was completely ruined in an earthquake. The Romans built a completely new settlement and the Bulgarians gave it the name *Karvuna*. At present Karvuna is an important agricultural centre. Cape Kaliakra is only 16 km away from it.

**KAVATSITE**

- a resort in the southern part of the Black Sea coast, situated 5 km to the south of Sozopol. One of the most fascinating gold-sand beaches with beautiful dunes is to be searched for here.

**KASANLUK**

- the main centre in the Rose Valley, inhabited since ancient times. The road, connecting the Danubian plain with the Aegean Sea, was crossed by Alexander of Macedonia, the Celts, the Goths, the Huns and the Pechenegues.

Its Thracian name was *Sevtopolis* when the town was the capital of the Thracian Kingdom. Later, it was re-named *Tilis* and became the capital of the Celts who have left halo of grandeur and glory in the city. In the Middle Ages the Kran Fortress in the town's vicinities was destroyed by the Turkish invaders. In the Russo-Turkish Wars its citizens deserted the town to return after the victory at Shipka. Many merchants made fortunes out of the rose oil trade, which made the precious extract popular worldwide. They sold it without mediators even to





America. On their return, they brought the latest innovations in the methods of production.

Kazanluk was one of the first towns to overthrow the outdated primitive craftsman's production and became an advanced industrial centre in passementerie, weaving, silk and cotton production, aluminium, copper and ceramic articles production, etc.

One of the town's "wonders" is the *Thracian Sepulchre* dating from the 3rd century B.C. It was unearthed by workers digging anti-aircraft trenches in 1944. It is a narrow arched corridor 1,5 m long and a round funeral hall with a diameter of 2,65 m, domed with a hive-like cupola 3,25 m high. This narrow space was turned by an unknown master into a temple of magic religious symbols and Thracian funeral rites combining life on earth with the idea of immortality.

To preserve the Kazanluk Sepulchre an exact copy of it has been built, to give the visitors the chance to have a glance at this testimony of advanced Thracian culture.

### **KOPRIVSHTITSA**

- is situated in Sredna Gora at an altitude of 1060 m above the sea level and is known for the town's jealous preservation of its Revival period spirit. Its original architecture consists in over 200





houses painted in different colours and now turned into precious cultural monuments of the Renaissance period. It is the town with the bridge, from which the first gun was fired to announce the beginning of the historical April Uprising against Turkish oppression in 1876.

### **KOTEL**

- a pretty Bulgarian town in the eastern part of the Balkan Mountain, which was founded in the beginning of the 15th century. It is nowadays an important cultural and artisan's centre which is world-famous for its carpet production. Kotel's architecture represents the typical local architecture of the Revival period.

### **KULATA**

- a border check-point, connecting Bulgaria and Greece by road and railway.

### **KOZLODUY**

- a historical site on the Danubian shore, near Vratsa. It is here, that in 1976 Hristo Botev's detachment of armed volunteers got off the "*Radetski*" and kissed a piece of Bulgarian soil before dying for their fatherland.

### **KYUSTENDIL**

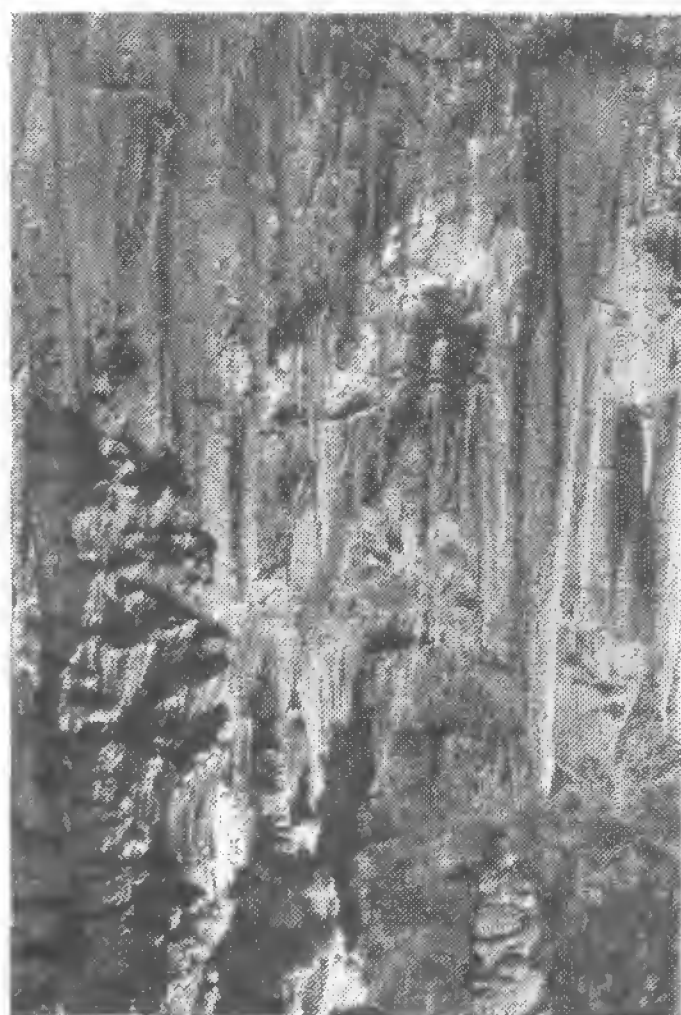
- a town situated 90 km to the south-west of Sofia and is a well-developed fruit-growing region. Its history dates thousands of years bback: it was a Thracian town called *Pautalia*, which in translation means "the town of the mineral baths". In Roman times it used to be important for the city's defence-the second biggest on the Balkan peninsula after Serdika. It has not only strong city walls but also marble baths, a thetre, a stadium. Its mineral springs make it a chief bulgarian balneological centre.

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### **LEDENIKA**

- one of the most visited caves in Bulgaria, situated 17 km to the west of Vratsa. It consists of numerous galleries, halls and lakes. The largest hall is called "The Concert Hall" because of its wonderful acoustics. The cave's dimensions are 60x40x23 in height. The vault is decorated with dozens of stalactites.



### **LEDENO EZERO** (*The Icy Lake*)

- is located high in the Rila mountain and is the highest lake on the Balkan peninsula. It owes its name to the fact that it is frozen almost all the year round.

### **LOM**

- a town on the Danube which was built on the remains of a 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman fortress called *Almus*. Today Lom is the second largest port after Rousse and is a significant commercial centre.

### **LOVECH**

- a town built on the bank of the river Osam just at the foot of the Balkan Range. It was built

over the foundations of the Roman fortress *Melta* and was converted into an impregnable citadel of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. In the 18th century it became a lively commercial centre, which was also among the most active revolutionary regions, frequently visited by Vassil Levski - the Apostle of freedom. A stately monument has been erected to his memory. It bears an inscription "*If I win, the whole people wins; if I lose, the loss is only mine.*" which used to be the Apostle's maxim.

Nowadays Lovech is a well-developed agricultural and industrial city. Some of its places of interest include the ruins of ancient Melta, the complex "Varosha" which has preserved the air of the typical local lifestyle, the only covered bridge which was constructed by Master Kolyo Ficheto in 1874.

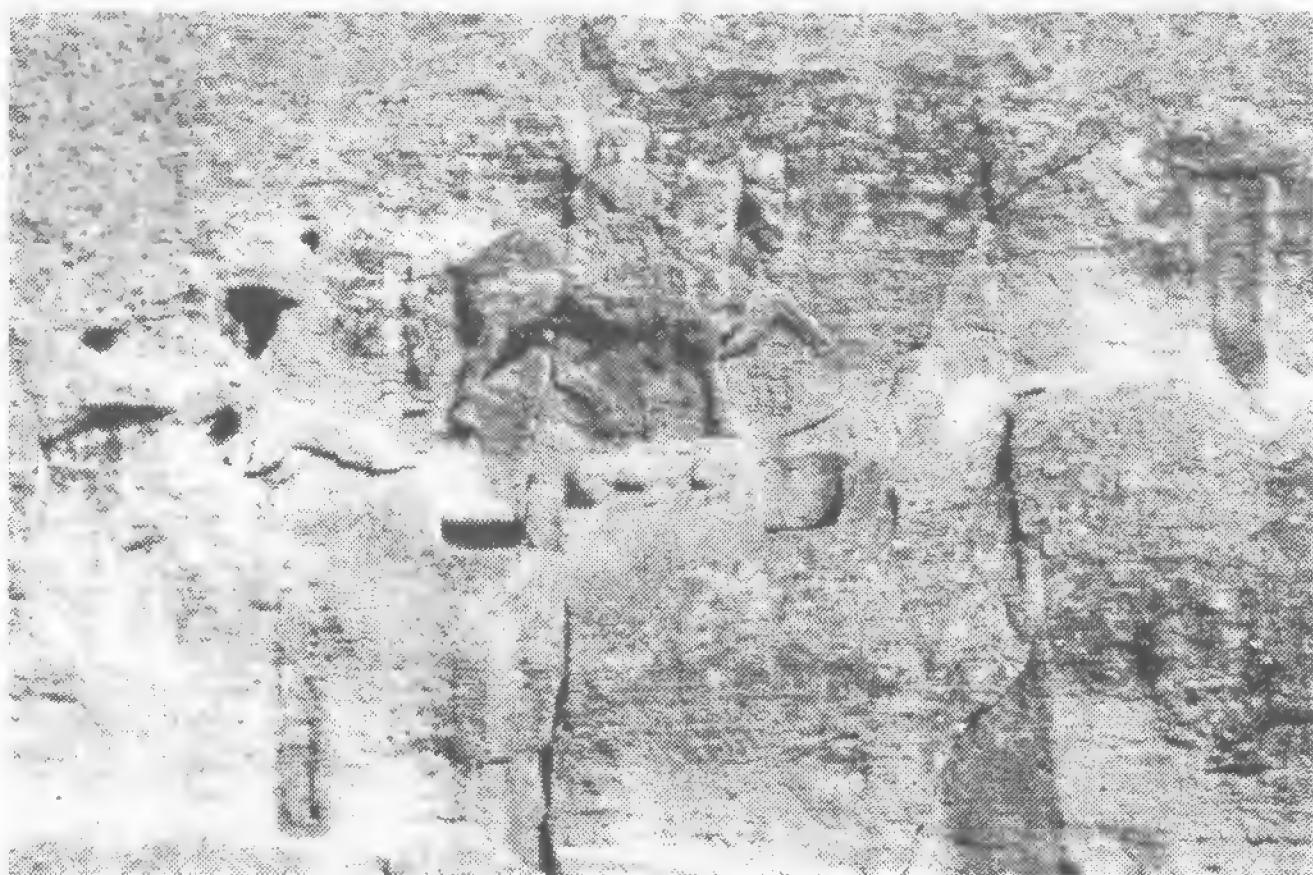




## MADARA

- is a national historical and archeological reservation located 17 km to the east of Shoumen. The vicinity was already inhabited during the age of neolith and was later dwelled by Thracians, Romans, Slavs and Proto-Bulgarians. Remains have been left from the First Bulgarian Kingdom (681-1018) as well as the fortress walls from the period of late feudalism and a Roman villa covering an area of 5 000 sq. m and consisting of 45 rooms, kitchens, baths and administrative buildings. A number of caves may be visited in the locality. The largest of them is Golyamata Peshtera (the Big Cave), whose entrance is 70 m high. It had been inhabited for thousands of years along with the other cave, known as the Cave of Nymphs, which has original paintings on its walls.

The well-known Madarski Konnik (*The Horseman of Madara*) is a rock relief, sculptured at a height of 23 m on a vertical rock near Madara. It





depicts a horseman who had just pierced a lion with his spear. There is a dog following his master. The composition is an allegory and presumably its authors had wanted to glorify a concrete historic event. It is likely that this event was the triumphant recognition of the Bulgarian ruler and his kingdom by the Byzantines in 705. It may also be said to celebrate the birth of a new European state called Bulgaria after years of Roman domination and Byzantine invasions on its territories. The agonising lion symbolised the defeated enemy and the dog was a common symbol of the people following loyally their governor. This is the only relief of its kind in Europe and was included in the list of the the world's cultural heritage sites in 1971.

### **MAGURA**

- is one of the most attractive and picturesque Bulgarian caves. It is found not far from Vidin. Its vast labyrinth is 3 km long and the walls of the stately underground halls had been painted beautifully. The latter are the only evidence of primitive art in south-eastern Europe. The cave had been known and explored since Roman times and the Middle Ages.

### **MALYOVITSA**

- is a hut high in the Rila mountain, 95 km from Sofia. It is situated at an altitude of 1 750 m above sea level. Its highest summit is also called Malyovitsa (2 729 m).

### **MALKO TURNOVO**

- a town in Strandja mountain developing timber-processing, marble and copper-ore production. There is a border check-point with Turkey at it..

### **MARITSA**

- is the longest Bulgarian river. Within Blgarian territory its length is 322 km. Its ancient name was *Heb-*

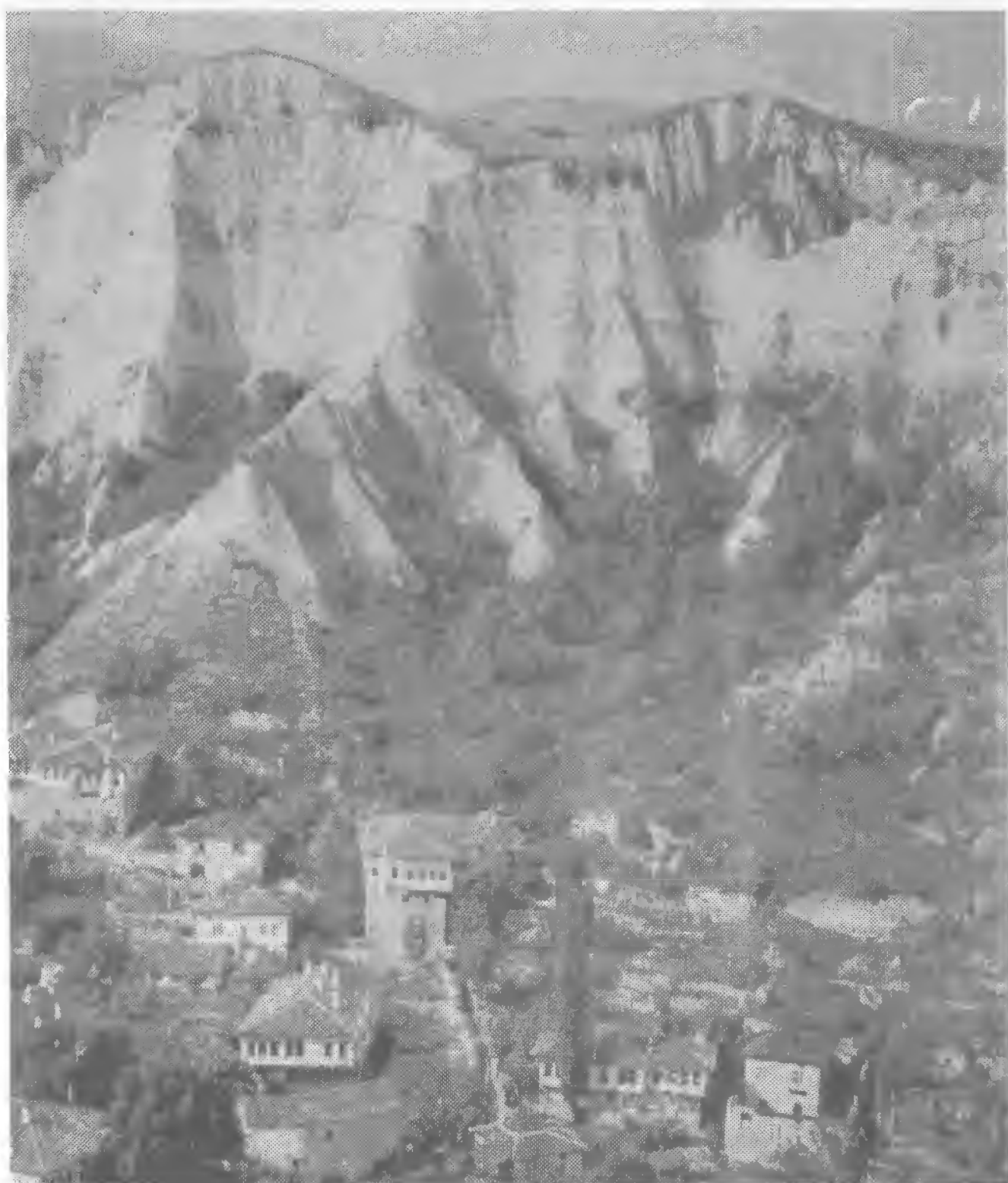
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ros and as such it was glorified by the Roman poet Ovidius. It springs from the Rila mountain, waters the Thracian plain and flows into the Aegean Sea.

### **MELNIK**

- is the smallest Bulgarian town. It is an archaeological reservation and a town-museum. It is situated 12 km off the main road running from Sofia to Thessaloniki and is hugged in the south-western slopes of Pirin amongst weird and fascinating shapes of nature. It was founded in ancient times but experienced prosperity during the Middle Ages and the Revival period. Valuable architectural and archaeological monuments. Melnik is also renowned for its thich red wine which, local people say, may be carried in a piece of cloth.







### **NARECHEN**

- is a balneological and climatological resort in the Rhodopes. Its mineral waters are recommended in the treatment of psychic disorders, neuroses and diseases of the alimentary tract.

### **NESSEBAR**

- a town-museum on the Black Sea shore, perched on a rocky peninsula 850 m in length and 300 m in width and connected with the mainland by a narrow strip. Traces of thousands-of-year-old human existence have been found along with the remains of an Thracian port, stone anchors, etc. which testify that the region was already inhabited in the 4th-2nd millenium B.C. In the 6th century B.C. the Greek colonizers set up a quick-growing settlement whose Thracian name *Messemyria* they preserved. Owing to the brisk trade the town maintained, two more ports and fortifications were built.

Under Roman domination the town continued its independent development until it was annexed to the Byzantine Empire. Subsequently, *Messemyria* maintained close relations with Constantinople and became an episcopal seat. Basilicas, baths, fortification walls, gates and pentagonal towers were built in those times.

In the beginning of the 9th century the town was captured by Khan Krum, who changed its name to *Nessebar*. Later, the town was ruled by Byzantines and Bulgarians in succession. Towards the middle of the 14th century *Nessebar* thrived economically, politically and culturally. Over forty churches

were built. Under Turkish domination the town was progressively on the decline to awake during the National Revival period in the 18th-19th centuries.

Nowadays Nessebar is one of the tourists' beloved places along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. Its beautiful houses and narrow charming streets attract many tourists. Some of the places of interest include the Old Bishopric dating from the 5th-6th century and the well-preserved churches "St Stephen" and "St Joan the Baptist", "Sts Archangel Michael and Gavril", "St Paraskeva", etc. All of them have luxurious decorations on the outside in combination with white stone, red brick and ceramic trays, niches, consoles and arcades.

The old city is protected by UNESCO and has been included in the list of the world's cultural heritage sites since 1983.





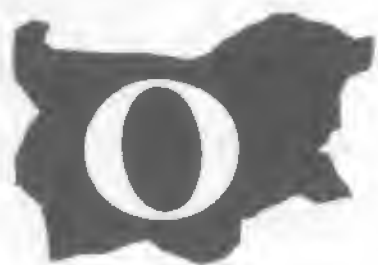
**NIKOPOL**

- is one of the oldest Bulgarian towns, situated in the river Danube's valley. It was founded by the Roman Emperor Mark Aurelius in 169 when an enormous fortress was erected. In the beginning of the 7th century Emperor Heraclius urbanised the settlement and widened its defence walls. Heraclius renamed the city into *Nikopolis* to commemorate his victory over the Persians in a battle near it. Nikopolis played an important role as a citadel and a commercial centre in the past.

**NIKUP**

- a village situated 15 km to the north of Veliko Turnovo over the ruins of an ancient Roman town called *Nikopolis ad Istrum*. It was founded by Emperor Trajan in 107 in commemoration of the victory against the Dacians in which Dacia (today included in Roumania) was conquered after 6 years of warfare. The town existed until the 7th century. It was reestablished by Bulgarians in the 10th century and started to expand rapidly. In archaeological excavations the following valuable relics have been found: the statue of the Goddess Clio, a marble statue of Eros, a bronze statue of Fortuna and a bronze bust of the Roman Emperor Gordian III (238-244) as well as the "Odeon" amphitheatre with thousands of coins minted at that time.





### **OBORIShte**

- a historical place in Sredna Gora. On April 13th 1876 the decision was taken here for the April Uprising against Ottoman oppression.

### **OBZOR**

- a village situated 60 km to the south of Varna, perched simultaneously on the very sea shore and on the Balkan mountain slopes. It was an ancient Greek settlement known as *Heliopolis*, e.g. "a town of the Sun". The Roman colonizers used it for the Roman Emperors' summer residences. Jupiter's temple was also erected in those times.





### **PANAGYURISHTE**

- a small town, hugged along the pretty Luda Yana river valley in Sredna Gora. It is historically associated with the Bulgarian National Revival period, when the town was an important trade centre. In 1949 in its suburbs the world-famous Thracian Gold Treasure of Panagyurishte was uncovered. It is unique in its nature, dating back to the 3rd century B.C. and consisting of 9 objects made of 23-carat gold with a total weight of 6,164 kg.

### **PARANGALITSA**

- one of the richest reservations in Rila, situated 30 km from Blagoevgrad. It is spread over an area of over 3 600 acres, in which the oldest tree in Bulgaria is grown - a Norway spruce 56 m high and 390 years old.

### **PAZARDJIK**

- a town situated in the western part of the Thracian plain, in Maritsa valley. It was set by the Tatars in the 15th century who called it *Tatar-Bazardjik*. It had a strategic geographical position on the road from Bosnia to Constantinople. This advantage promoted the town's quick expansion as a trade and agricultural centre. A number of cultural monuments have been preserved to the present day such as the church "St Virgin" (1837) famous for its iconostasis - a masterpiece of the wood-carving art. The Kurshum Djamiya (The Bullet Mosque), built in 1667, is a marvellous epitome of Moslem architecture. Eski Mosque is the oldest in the city and was constructed in 1540.

**PERNIK**

- a town situated on both banks of the river Struma, 30 km to the south-west of Sofia. The name originated from the Slavic God Perun. In the 9th century, when the town was called *Peringrad*, it was a stronghold against the Ottoman invasions. During the 500 years of Ottoman domination it was of purely commercial significance. After 1891 the town started its industrial development in the fields of metallurgy and ore-production. This is the region of the biggest mines in Bulgaria.

**PETRICH**

- is a town at the foot of Belasitsa, close to the Greek border. It was built over an ancient Thracian village. The remains of the fortress in its suburbs date back to 1014, when the crucial battles of Tsar Samuil were fought against the Byzantine emperor Vassilius II.

**PLEVEN**

- a large city in the Danubian plain. The pre-historic nearby locality Kailaka is only 2 km away from it and was inhabited by Thracians and later by Romans who gave it the name *Storgoziya*. The Slavs changed it to *Kamenets*. The name Pleven had been reported since 1266 when the city was dominated by the Magyars. Under the Turkish yoke it grew into an important centre of trade and crafts owing to its strategic position. During the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) the town became famous for the 5-month siege of Osman Pasha's troops in which over 40 000 victims were taken. The fall of Pleven was crucial to the War's outcome.

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**PLISKA**

- a village, situated 30 km to the north-east of Shoumen. It bears the remnants of the capital of the First Bulgarian Kingdom. In 681 there were three defensive concentric circles over a total of 23 sq. km, which formed an impressive system of pits and thick fortified walls. In the centre was the stronghold itself containing a palace with a throne-room, a small palace- the ruler's residence, a water palace, pagan and Christian ritual buildings. Many churches were built after the Christianisation in 865, the most famous of which is the Big Basilica - 190 m long and 30 m wide.

**PLOVDIV**

- the second largest Bulgarian city, situated in the Thracian plain, at the crossroads between the Orient and Western Europe. It was built on six hills, on both sides of Maritsa river. It is one of the oldest towns in Bulgarian lands. It had inherited a pre-historic settlement from the second millenium B.C. The Thracians gave it the name *Eumolpis*. In 342 it was conquered by Philip II of Macedonia



and the city was named after him - *Philipopolis*. Later the Thracians regained it and called it *Pulpudeva*. The Romans associated it with three hills and, hence, they named the town *Trimontsium*. From 46 A.D. it experienced upheaval in all spheres of life. Its advantageous position "on three hills" additionally protected the fortress, strengthened by double stone walls.

Later, the Slavs took it and called it *Puldin*. The city was included in Bulgarian territories under Tsar Simeon in the 10th century. In 1364 it was captured by the Turks and once again re-named to *Philibe*. Gradually, the town grew into an administrative



and military centre. During the National Revival period it played a leading part in the promotion of Bulgarian culture. After Bulgaria's Liberation from Ottoman yoke it became the capital of Principality Eastern Romelia (1878-1885). Among the numerous sightseeings "*ancient Plovdiv*" is one of the most captivating.

### **POBITI KAMANI**

- a picturesque vicinity, situated 18km to the west of Varna. It is a small sand desert with scattered high stone columns of most various and weird shapes. These unique rock formations are, in fact, enormous stalactites formed by the water, trickling slowly in the tectonic cracks in the limestone layer, which has by now been washed away. This, com-



bined with the action of the wind, has resulted in a fairy-tale forest of stone.



### **POMORIE**

- a town on the Black Sea shore, situated 21 km to the north of Bourgas and built over a lovely peninsula. Its first settlers were the Greek colonizers in the 15th century B.C. who named it *Anbiol*. Under Roman rule the town underwent fast development. It was many times reduced to ashes and no traces have, therefore, been left from its historic past. Nowadays Pomorie is an important balneological and mud-curing centre. The cellar in Pomorie is one of the largest and most reputed in Bulgaria.

### **PRESLAV**

- situated 18 km to the south-west of Shoumen. In the south are the ruins of the Second Bulgarin Kingdom, whose capital Great Preslav was in the 10th and 11th centuries. Observing and improving the traditions, the Bulgarian builders erected for the first time in Europe a town, protected by thick stone walls in two concentric circles. The outer walls were 3,25 m thick and were made of square stone blocks. The inner walls, or, the Citadel, were 2,80 m thick and protected the palace and the ad-

ministrative buildings.

Today, parts of the stone wall have been preserved together with fragments of the gates, the stately palace and the Golden Church with its 12 niches and 12 columns, all made of marble.

The museum "Great Preslav" owns a rich collection of archaeological findings manifesting different aspects of the material and spiritual culture in Bulgarian lands during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom.



## PROVADIYA

- a town, situated 45 km to the south-east of Varna, It was founded in the Middle Ages and had existed under the Greek name *Provaton* and the Slavic name *Ovech*. To the east of the town remains have been left from a Bulgarian fortress.

**RAZGRAD**

- a town in the Ludogorie region, between Shoumen and Rousse. Over the ruins of a Thracian village, the Romans built a stronghold, known as *Arbitus*. Excavations revealed the fortress in 1953. The beautiful mosque "Ibrahim Pasha" is one of the largest in Bulgaria.

**ROPOTAMO**

- a river flowing into the Black Sea 15 km south of Sozopol. Its exotic charm resembles that of a tropical jungle with its luxurious vegetation, lianas, slow-flowing waters with lilies in it and fascinating dunes near the tributary.

**ROUSSE**

- is the fourth biggest Bulgarian city, situated in the Danubian plain. In the 2nd century the Romans erected a fortification, called *Sexaginta Prista*, or, "the city of the sixty ships", which defended the military port. Rousse of today dates back to the time of the First Bulgarian Kingdom. Under the Turkish yoke, a huge stronghold "*Ruschuk*" was built and it played an important part as a military and commercial centre. It is the main Bulgarian city on the Danube and the administrative centre of the Northern Bulgarian District. In 1866 the first railway was built in Bulgaria, running between Varna and Rousse. During the National Revival period the town took an active part in the struggle against Ottoman oppression by providing the link between the secret internal revolutionary committees and the Central revolutionary committee whose seat was in Bucharest.

Nowadays, Rousse is the biggest Bulgarian port on the Danube and a key industrial and cultural centre.

**ROZOVA DOLINA** (*The Rose Valley*)

- an extremely beautiful and fertile valley, huddled between the Balkan Mountain and Sredna Gora and spreading from Kazanluk to the village of Rosino. It is known as the second birthplace of the rose, which was brought from Turkey in the 17th century. The valley offers favourable conditions for the growing and blossoming of the roses, which yield great amounts of high-quality oil and attar. Three thousand kilograms of rose blossom are necessary for the production of one litre of rose attar. Bulgaria produces over 80% of the world's rose oil and attar.

Lavender is also grown in the Rose Valley as well as mint and other oil-yielding plants.

Every year in the beginning of June the great *Fest of the Rose* is celebrated.







### **SAMOKOV**

- a town, situated in the Rila mountain, 60 km to the south-east of Sofia. It was established in the 15th century as an artisan's centre. In the 19th century Samokov numbered 85 furnaces and 20 foundries. The hammers of the smiths' workshops were propelled by the river Iskar waters. Hence, the name of the town, which means "forges on its own". It was the cradle of a unique icon-painting and wood-carving school, whose works decorate the museums and churches all over the country. It was the birthplace of Zachari Zograph - the artist who painted the most fascinating churches in the 19th century. Some of the places worth visiting include the church "St Virgin", the Bayrakli Mosque and the big fountain in oriental style. The high-mountain resort Borovets is only 11 km away from Samokov.

### **SANDANSKI**

- a town, situated 170 km to the south of Sofia and built over the Thracian settlement called *Merius*. The Romans re-named it to *Desudava*, piped the waters of the mineral springs and erected the temple to Asclepion. The Slavs, impressed by the curative power of the springs and baths, called it *Sveti Vrach* ("St Healer"). Since ancient times the city's fame has derived from its wholesome 82°C mineral waters curing diseases of the skeletal-muscular system, gynaecological disorders, etc. The hot waters are also used in the green-houses for vegetable growing.



**SAPAREVA BANYA**

- a balneological centre, 13 km north-east of Dupnitsa. The hottest mineral water in Bulgaria gushes forth here at a temperature of 101,4°C and is used in the treatment of various diseases. A small necropolis and a church dating from the 12th-13th century may be visited in its vicinity.

**.SHERBA**

- a reservation situated in river Kamchia valley, to the east of the Balkan Mountain Range. It covers an area of approximately 5 500 acres and is a place where unique species of deer have been preserved. Since 1932 it has been a favourite site for hunting of the foreign tourists.

**SHIPKA**

- a village situated 10 km north of Kazanluk which has become historical by the legendary Shipka battle during the Russo-Turkish War in August 1877 and January 1878. In 1902 a magnificent temple in the style of the 17th century Russian churches was consecrated at the summit in memory of the Russian soldiers perished for Bulgaria's liberation. On the outside, the church is lavishly decorated with ceramic panels, gilt cupola and crosses. The fired cartridges in the battles were used for the casting of 17 bells, of which the heaviest is 12 tons. Eighteen marble sarcophagi are kept in the temple's basement, in which the bones of the perished soldiers in the War are kept. On the way to the ridge, some eight kilometers to the north, the Monument of Freedom can be seen on top Stoletov. The monumental structure is 32 m high, with a bronze lion 8 m high and 4 m long which is said to always keep watch over Bulgarian freedom. This is the site of the crucial battles in the Russo-Turk-

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ish War fought on 9th, 10th and 11th of August 1878. The Turkish troops had to be prevented from taking Plevna, where the besieged Turkish army was awaiting support. The bloodiest fights were at Orlovo Gnezdo, where Russian and Bulgarian soldiers fought using all possible means to beat off the Turks using all possible means.



### SHOUMEN

- the city situated near the high plateau of the Pre-Balkan Range, 90 km away from Varna. The hillocks surrounding the town provided Thracians and Romans with natural protection and served as fortresses. Later, at the time of the First Bulgarian Kingdom, a new fortress was built to defend the route to the first Bulgarian capital Pliska. The name Shoumen is of Slavic origin and was used to denote the thick forest covering the locality. During the Ottoman yoke, Shoumen was turned into an unassailable fortress with towers, gates, drawbridges and battlements.

The town is one of the ancient cultural centres in Bulgaria. In 1856 one of the first reading clubs was opened, where Bulgarian drama and theatre were born. The first modern orchestra also dates back to those times.

Today Shoumen is an industrial city producing trucks, agricultural machines, aluminium, cigarettes and beer.

**SILISTRA**

- a town on the Danube , situated simultaneously in the Dobrudja plain. It originated as a Roman fortress, built by Emperor Trajan in the 2nd century and called *Dorostorum*. The city was repeatedly pillaged before being restored in the 6th century by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian and re-named *Dorostol*. Between the 8th and 10th centuries the settlement was called *Drustar*. Today Silistra is a centre of brisk trade and developing industry.

**SKALNI MOSTOVE**      (*Rocky Bridges*)

- a unique natural phenomenon, which can be seen to the north of the village of Zaburdo in the Rhodopes. In the course of time, nature has created two fantastic stone bridges. The bigger one, 70 m high and 35 m wide, spans over a deep precipice. The smaller one, which is narrower and 60 m in length, spans over a stream of running water, which disappears under it to reappear 3 km away. One of the rarest plants in the world with origins in the Glacial period "*Hemerllia Rhadopensis*" grows in this locality.

**SLIVEN**

- a town at the the southern foot of the Balkan mountain. The region was inhabited by Thracians, Romans and Byzantines in succession. The town's name was invariably *Hissarluka*. Towards the 13th-14th century the city grew into an important cultural and religious centre. During the National Revival period it became a flourishing craftsman's and trading place producing wine and breeding silkworms. In 1834 the first textile factory was set up by Dobri Zhelyazkov in Sliven. Later, leather, cigarette and furniture industries also began to be developed. Sliven is known as "the town of the 100

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chieftains" because of its revolutionary spirit and the heroes it had born for the national liberation movement.

### SMOLYAN

- an amphitheatrical town, situated at an altitude of 1010 m above the sea level in the western parts of the Rhodopa mountains. It is 109 km away from Plovdiv. Before the Ottoman invasions the city had borne the name *Ezerovo*, which means "the town of the lakes". It was afterwards re-named to *Pahmakli*. Its today's name derives from the name of the Slavic tribe Smolien which had inhabited the locality. Smolyan is famous for its lakes in the north and its geographical position between the two summits Mourgavets and Snezhanka. The enchanting scenery of the nearby resort Pamporovo attract plenty of foreign tourists.

### SOFIA

- the capital of Bulgaria, situated at 350 m above the sea level just at the foot of Vitosha. It is one of the oldest cities in Europe, established over 5 000 years ago.

In the 5th century B.C. the Thracian tribe Serdae settled in the area and gave it the name *Serdika*.

Being situated at the crossroads between the East and the West, Serdika was constantly subject to severe attacks. Philip II of Macedonia devastated the city in 339 on his way back from his march on the Scythian tribes. Alexander the Great also crossed this country on his way back from the Danubian campaign. In the 3rd century the settlement became the capital of the Roman province Dacia under the name *Ulpia*. In 447 the town was burned by Attila. Emperor Justinian (527-565) rebuilt the city and erected solid fortification walls which thereafter protected it from foreign raids.

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Towards the end of his rule Emperor Justinian started the construction of "St Sofia" church - one of the few ancient monuments preserved from those times.

In the beginning of the 9th century the town was included in the territories of the Bulgarian Kingdom under Khan Krum and was given the name *Sredets*. The settlement grew into a strategic political, commercial, military and cultural centre. It fell under Byzantine domination in 1018, which date marked a period of decline thereafter.

From 1048 to 1078 Sredets was altered to *Triaditsa* and was plundered by the Pechenegues.

In 1096 during the first Crusade the knights



stopped at it and set up a military camp. Later, in 1183 the city was pillaged and devastated by the Magyars and Serbs, and in 1189 it was recaptured by the crusaders led by Frederick Barberus. In 1194 the town was included in the boundaries of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom and its old name remained until the 14th century when it was changed to Sofia, after the name of the "St Sofia" Basilica. In 1382 Sofia was attacked by the Turks and finally



captured in 1396 after the battle at Nikopolis. The city had a crucial geographical position for the Ottoman Empire.

After the Liberation from Turkish domination in 1878 it was proclaimed capital of Bulgaria and became the biggest political, administrative, cultural and university centre in the country. The numerous invasions throughout its history have left but a few historical remnants. One might notice that the majority of the houses in the central part were built after the Liberation in 1878. Some of the places of interest worth seeing are the Eastern Gate with the stone walls, the churches "St Sofia", "St George", the Boyana church, the mosque at the city baths, the Russian church "St Nikola", the Cathedral "Alexander Nevski", the crypt with the precious exhibition of ancient paintings and icons, Vassil Levski's monument, the National Theatre House "Ivan Vazov" and many museums.

Being so close to Vitosha, Sofia offers a variety of entertainment, sports, rest and excursions in the mountains.

### **SOPOT**

- a small town in the Rose Valle, situated 60 km to the north of Plovdiv. It is the birthplace of the great Bulgarian writer *Ivan Vazov* (1850-1921).

### **SOZOPOL**

- a town of the southern Black Sea coast, situated on a picturesque peninsula 33 km to the south-east of Bourgas. It was set in 610 by the Greeks, who named it *Apolonia*. Having acquired the status of city-state, it became a big trading centre. Ten centuries later it was re-named to *Sozopolis*, which meant "the town of salvation". Rich and prospering, the port had its own army and fleet, which was subsequently looted by the Romans legions of

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Marcus Lucullus in 72 B.C.

The thirteen-meter high Apollo's bronze figurine was driven to Rome to celebrate the triumphant victory of the Emperor and was later moved to the Capitoleum.

Sozopol repeatedly changed hands from Byzantine to Bulgarian until the complete fall of the Balkan peninsula under Turkish rule. The town was on the decline and was reduced to a small fisherman village. It was revived in the 18th-19th centuries when 150 houses were built in the typical style together with the churches "St George", "St Virgin", "Sts Cyril and Methodius", etc. The houses in Sozopol, as those in Nessebar, have a charm and architecture of their own - the stone ground floor is typical for the seaside villages along with the wooden staircase leading to the second floor, upholstered with wood to protect the buildings from the humid air and temperature changes. The fig-trees and the trellis vines provide their natural background.

Every September the famous Appolo's Holidays take place here. This is a 10-day fest of actors, artists, singers, musicians, dancers and poets from all over the country.

## **SREBARNA**

- a lake, situated 16 km to the west of Silistra and only a kilometer away from the Danube. It is a natural reservation, included in the List of the world's cultural heritage sites. The vegetation is represented predominantly by reed, reaching up to 6-7 m in height. The lake is populated by 6 fish species, over 160 bird species and 35 mammal species. Of all, the loveliest are the pelicans which live in colonies of 60-120 couples.

The Austrian researcher Phelix Kanits, enchanted by the diversity of the animal world in Srebarna,

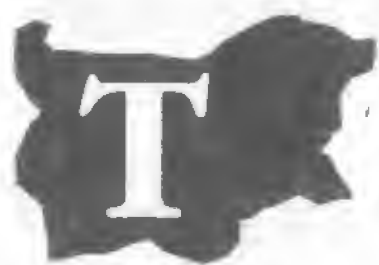
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exclaimed: “*This is the Eldorado of the marsh birds!*”

### STARA ZAGORA

- a town, situated on the southern slopes of Eastern Sredna Gora. It was built over the foundations of the ancient Thracian settlement *Beroe*. The town was re-named as follows : *Augusta Trayana* - in Roman times (2nd century), *Irinipol* - in Byzantine times, *Eski Zaara* - under Turkish oppression and *Stara Zagora* - by the Bulgarians. During the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) the city was devastated for the third time in its long history. It was resurrected from the ashes to become a modern industrial and cultural centre.

The Stara Zagora mineral baths are only 15 km to the west and their 37°C waters have a magic curative effect in the treatment of rheumatic and kidney diseases as well as many others.



### TAUKLIMAN

- a beach strip on the northern Black Sea coast with small romantic islands and mineral springs 15 km from cape Kaliakra. The holiday village "Russalka" is found here.

### TARGOVISHTTE

- a town, situated 130 km to the west of Varna. It was founded in the 16th century by the Turks, who named it *Esku Jumaya*. In the past it was famous for its annual fairs. Nowadays Targovishte is developing different branches of industry and agriculture. The famous mineral springs are found not far from Targovishte.

### TROYAN

- a typical town in the Balkan mountains, situated on both banks of the river Ossam, 35 km to the east of Lovech. It is famous for its fine pottery, the Trojan ceramics and the Trojan plum brandy. The Trojan Monastery is to be found not far from the town.

### TOMBUL DJAMIYA (Tombul Mosque)

- the largest mosque in Bulgaria, which is found in Shoumen. It is remarkable for its architecture, dating back to 1744. Both its exterior and interior are impressive.

### TOUZLATA

- marshy ponds, covering an area of over 160 acres, 5 km to the north-east of Balchik. Various diseases of the skin, peripheral nervous and skeloto-muscular systems are successfully treated here with mud.

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**TRYAVNA**

- is situated 18 km from Gabrovo. It was established after the fall of Turnovo under Turkish yoke to shelter the refugees from the ancient Bulgarian capital. The city is a precious monument of Bulgarian National Revival architecture. The houses have been constructed in a style of their own, typically with rich internal ornamentation, paintings and wood-carvings of the Tryavna School of Artists.

**TSAR KRUM**

- a village, situated to the east of Shoumen. In the 9th century Khan Omurtag built an enormous fortified military camp in this region. The preserved monument with epitaphs is extremely valuable. Omurtag's script was known as "Chatalar": it was inscribed with Greek letters on a 6-meter- high stone column and is thought to refer to the year 822, when a palace and fortified walls were due to be built on the river Ticha, today's Kamchia.

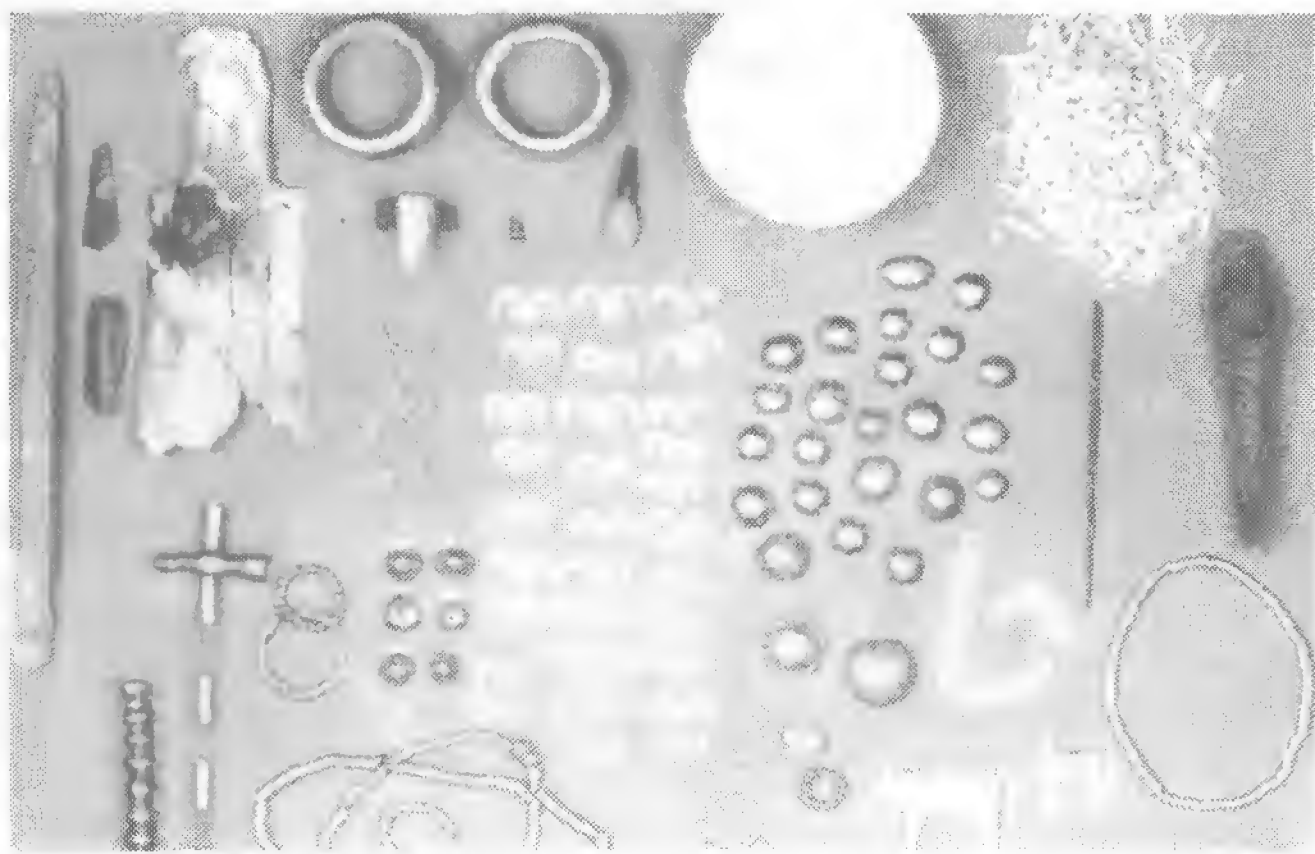




## VARNA

- the third largest Bulgarian city, a significant industrial, cultural and tourist centre. It is known as the "the *Queen of the Black Sea*" or "the *Pearl of the Black Sea*", or, "the *Summer Capital*", etc.

The locality had been inhabited since pre-historic times. Evidence has been found out dating back to the paleolith and the neolith. The oldest



gold in the world (4 000 B.C.) has been unearthed precisely in the Varna necropolis. The gold treasure is comprised of over 2 000 objects, exhibited in the Museum of History in Varna. Towards the 12th century B.C. the Thracian tribe Crobizae built their pile-dwellings in the Varna lakes. In the 5th century they united with the powerful kingdom of the Odrisae. In 585 the settlement *Odessos* was established by the Ionic Greeks. During the 3-century Roman domination *Odessos* became one of

the chief commercial centres in this part of the Empire. The Roman baths and the Tower have been turned into an evidence for the prosperity and progress the city enjoyed. Under Byzantine domination Odessos maintained the high standard of living and industrial development. The early construction of churches and monasteries is another testimony that Odessos was among the first to adopt Christianity in Maesoe.

The name *Varna* was first reported in the 6th century and has an undeniable Slavic origin. Presumably, the Slavs inhabiting the shores of the Provadiya river, called it Varna, which in translation meant "black", or "crow". Later, the name of the river was transferred to the city itself. From 681 it was included in the boundaries of the First Bulgarian Kingdom. Of all Black Sea towns, Varna was the first to fall under Turkish rule in 1393.



During the five centuries of Turkish oppression Varna's fortifications played an important part in the defence system of the Ottoman Empire. In 1443 the Polish-Hungarian King Ladislaw III Yagello undertook a march to save the Christian people under Oriental domination. But he failed to shake the still powerful Turkish Empire. The King and his troops were defeated on November 11th 1444 in the vicinities of Varna.

In the 18th and 19th centuries Varna became a lively port and trade centre. In 1840 many Consular Departments were established in it as those of Austria, England, France, Belgium, Russia, etc.

In 1865 Mithad Pasha assigned the task of building the first railway line running from Varna to Rousse to a British company. It connected directly Constantinople with Bucharest and the counties of Central Europe.

After the Liberation the construction of the Varna port in 1906 promoted the fast development of commerce.

Nowadays Varna is a big cultural and university centre. It hosts the annual festival "Varna Summer" at which artists, musicians and ballet-dancers from all over the world compete. The main city attractions include the Museum of History and Arts, the Ethnographic Museum, the Naval Museum, the Roman baths, the cathedral "Assumption", the Seaside Gardens, the Aquarium, the Dolphinarium, etc.

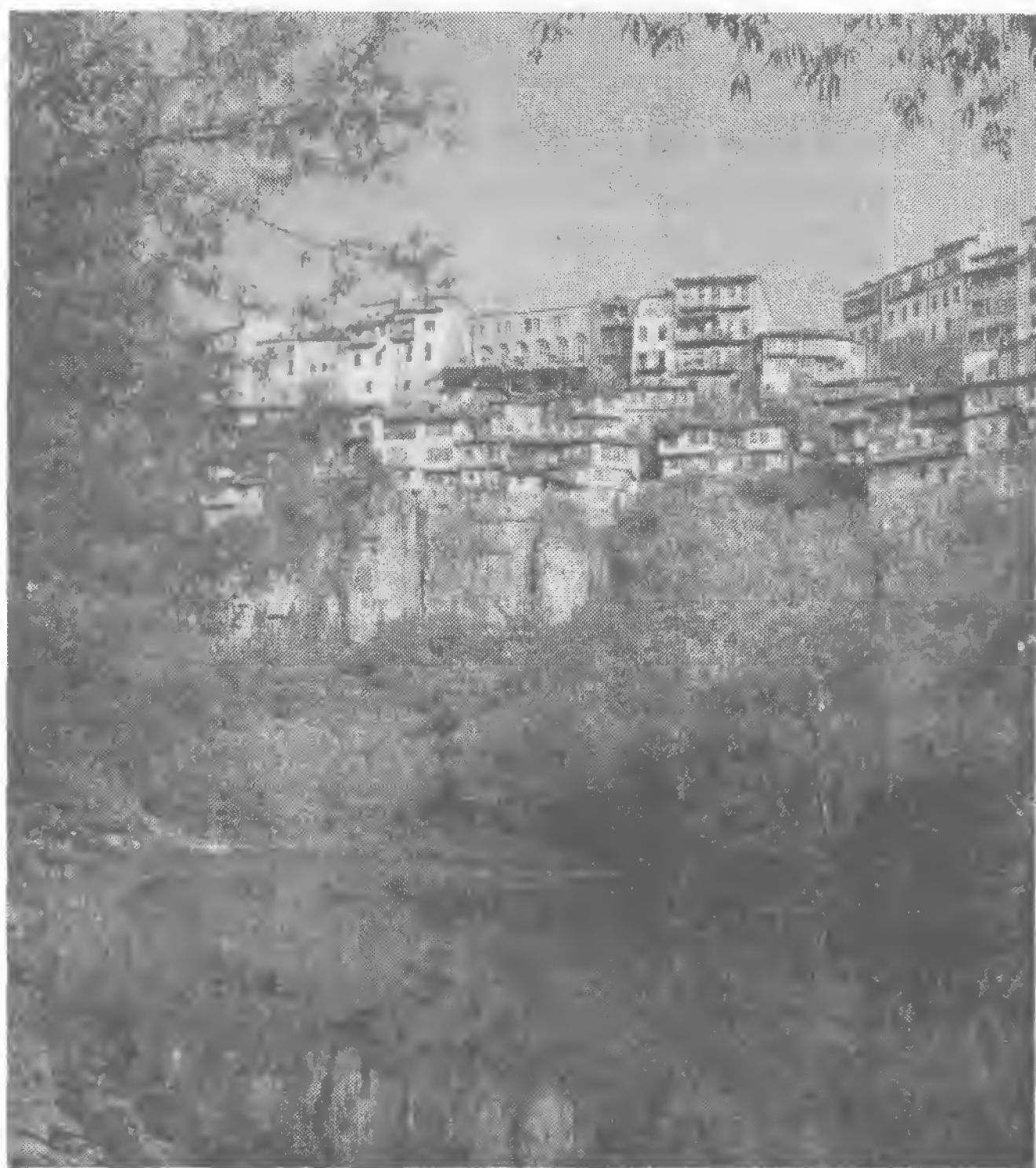
## **VELIKO TURNOVO**

- is one of the most magnificent Bulgarian cities, situated at the northern foot of the Balkan Mountain, on both banks of the river Yantra.

Veliko Turnovo fascinates tourists from all over the world not only with its amphitheatrical geographical position, but also with its plenty architectural monuments. The high hills had first attracted

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the primitive men and later the Thracians. The Romans rose fortifications to protect the area. Towards the end of the 12th century the city was proclaimed capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (1185-1396) when it expanded to include the hills Tsarevets, Trapezitsa and Momina Krepost. Thus, the newly-formed settlement was called Tirnovgrad, which meant "*the queen of the cities*", sometimes interpreted as "the second only to Byz-



antine". The hills Tsarevets and Trapezitsa were engirdled by strong stone walls with battlements and towers.

In the south-eastern part of Tsarevets is situated the tetrahedral "Baldwin Tower", where the Latin Emperor Baldwin of Flanders found its death after



having been defeated and captured by the Bulgarian Tsar Kaloyan in 1205. Bulgarian Patriarchy was also seated in Tsarevets with its 17 churches and the boyars' houses.

During the Middle Ages Veliko Turnovo sheltered the champions of Bulgarian culture in Sveta Gora hillock, where the famous Turnovo School of artists was founded by Patrirc Evtimiy. After the city was taken by the Turks in 1396 it was completely ruined.

It was in the 18th century that Veliko Turnovo was once again aroused for new life: new houses were being built on the sunny slopes on both banks of the river. Wonderful models of the architecture typical of that period have been preserved till the present day. After the Liberation the town became an industrial and cultural centre. In 1879 the First National Assembly of the independent state adopted the Turnovo Constitution.

The places of interest for tourists are the Tsarevets hillock with its fortress walls, the old Turkish town-hall, the "house with the monkey", and the churches. In the city's vicinities over a dozen of monasteries were built in the Middle Ages, of which the most interesting is the "Preobrazhenski Manastir".

## **VELINGRAD**

- a town, situated in the western part of the Rhodopes, at an altitude of 800 m above the sea level. It is a well-known balneological centre with 56 mineral water springs, fresh mountain air which lure many tourists throughout the year.

## **VIDIN**

- a town in North-western Bulgaria situated on the river Danube. It is the centre of a rich agricultural region. In its place, there used to exist an

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ancient Roman stronghold, called Bononiya. During the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (12th-14th centuries) Bdin used to be the best fortified city in North-Western Bulgaria. The well-preserved fortress "*Baba Vida*" also dates from those times and is an impressing monument of Bulgarian medieval construction.

### **VRATSA**

- a town in the western part of the Balkan Mountain range, situated in the picturesque gorge *Vratsata*. It was founded by the Thracians and in the Midle Ages it remained to be an important stronghold with turrets.

Today the town is the centre of chemical industry in Bulgaria.

### **VINITSA**

- a housing estate near Varna. It was an ancient settlement called Kestrich, where the merchants from Genoa organised big markets in the 12th century.

**YAMBOL**

- a town, situated on both banks of the river Tundja, 100 km west of Bourgas. It used to be an ancient village close to which are the remains of the Thracian *Kabile*. Fortified by Philip II of Macedonia, the city became a significant administrative and economic centre of the Roman Empire. During the Barbarian invasions it was completely ruined. The Byzantines built it anew and gave it the name *Diamiolis*, later changed to *Anexopolis* (11th-12th century).

**YUNDOLA**

- a small resort, situated between Rila and the Rhodopes, at 1380 m above the sea level amidst a vast coniferous forest.

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## ZHERAVNA

- a town-museum classified as an architectural reservation. It is situated in the eastern part of the Balkan Mountain, 16 km to the south of Kotel. The village has not changed its image since the beginning of the 19th century. The Old Church was built in 1834 and owns a rich collection of icons. The cosy two-storey houses overlook the narrow cobbled streets and are decorated with wood-carvings both from the inside and from the outside. Zheravna is the birthplace of many pioneers of Bulgarian culture and national independence.



**ZLATITSA**

- a town, situated 76 km to the east of Sofia. During the Ottoman yoke it was preserved as a prospering craftsman's and trading centre and was the seat of the District administration owing to its strategic geographical situation.

In 1443 Zlatitsa was occupied by the Crusaders of the Polish King Ladislav III, the Magyar King Yan Huniadi and the Serbian Commander Georgi Brankovich - all of them on a crusade against the Turkish oppression.

**ZLATNI MOSTOVE** (*Golden Bridges*)

- a locality, situated upon the north-westerly slopes of Vitosha, at 1350-1500 m above the sea level. A stone river runs downwards in the heart of a centenarian pine forest, formed by enormous round syenite covering the bottom of Vladaya river.



**URVICH**

- a medieval Bulgarian fortress, built on the right bank of the river Iskar, to the south-east of Sofia. It was used to defend the road to the capital. The fortress inspired a number of legends about Tsar Ivan Shishman's last days and the struggle of the Bulgarian people against the Ottoman invaders in the 14th century. Nowadays only the remains of the fortress walls are visible as well as the foundations of the two churches.

**UZUNDJOVO**

- is located only 10 km away from Haskovo. Its name was reported in the Ottoman chronicles in 1607 by which time the town was renowned for its annual fairs and markets.





## BULGARIAN CUISINE

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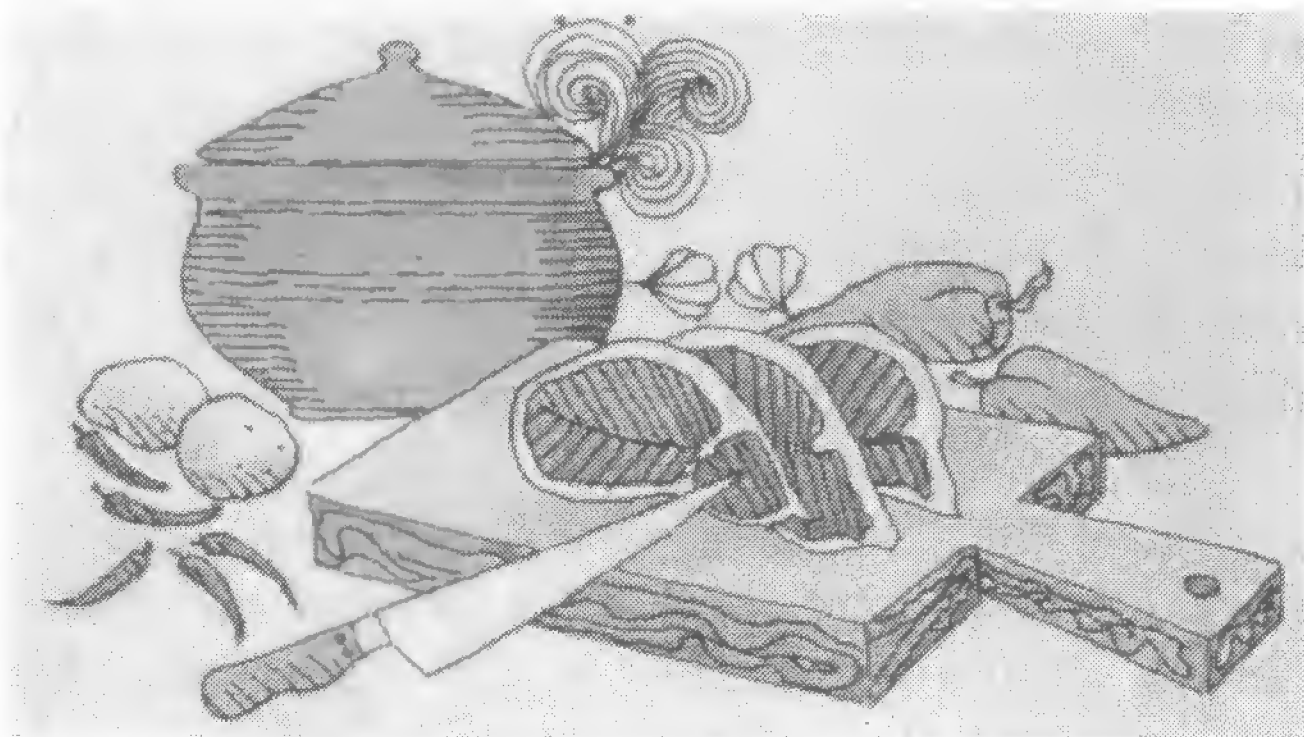
Why, you might ask. After all, there are plenty of countries in the world boasting a varied and delicious cuisine, along with long-standing culinary traditions. The methods used in Bulgarian cooking are not at all different from those used worldwide. Be that as it may - you still should try Bulgarian cuisine, for there are characteristic features which lend a specific taste and flavour to the dishes: namely those features which have helped to make it popular far beyond the country's borders.

### WHAT ARE THEY?

Above all, the concurrent heating of products on a low fire. The food must simmer on all accounts - boil, roast or stew gently. That is the only way to retain the nutritive qualities while achieving *superb flavour and taste* at the same time. The same effect is also achieved through the variety of products which agree well with the seasoning and fats. Seasoning is usually subtle and unobtrusive. As to methods of preparation - since times immemorial the Bulgarians have favoured stewing, roasting, boiling and... the earthenware dish. The roasting of food on charcoal embers is also widespread, leaving the meat deliciously tender and succulent. There are specialities which can only be sampled in the country itself. *Cheverme, Kebap, baked cheese, loukanka, soudjouk, babek*, different salads and pickles and, of course, *the Bulgarian yoghurt*, have long since gained fame and popularity. This is why apart from the recipes included in the present brochure we are also offering information about the country's folk-style spots where national cuisine is served. One more thing - even if the following

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recipes will give you a fairly good idea of the taste and flavour of Bulgarian cuisine, it would be even better idea to visit the country itself for the real thing.



## **BULGARIAN DRINKS**

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Wine production is one of the oldest crafts in Bulgarian lands. The emergence of the first Bulgarian vine-growers and wine producers dates thousands of years back in history and many civilizations have inherited this skill.

Archaeological excavations provide ample evidence to the fact that Thracia was the cradle of wine production. In this region the cult to the Divinity of vines and gaiety Dionysus was extremely popular. The first settlers, the Thracians who were the ancestors of the Bulgarians, appeared in these lands thousands of years B.C. It is them that Homer glorifies in the Iliad as the bold soldiers of Tsar Rezos, an ally with the Troyans. This was also the age of the legendary Orpheus, the sacred pagan rituals and holidays accompanied with strong sparkling wine. The archaeological findings with the reliefs featuring the Thracian deity Sevacios are still another prove that the Thracians and our ancestors were unsurpassed in wine production.

Later, towards the middle of 9th century, wine production was developed on such a large scale that the then-Khan Krum issued a decree by which all vine-yards were to be eradicated. The Bulgarian people, however, could not abandon their love for the cultivation of the juicy grapes and the production of fine vintage wine.

A whole series of Bulgarian folk songs and holidays have been preserved to the present day, showing that wine production has always been part and parcel of the Bulgarian culture and lifestyle.

Vine-growing and wine production were developed simultaneously. Before the Liberation from

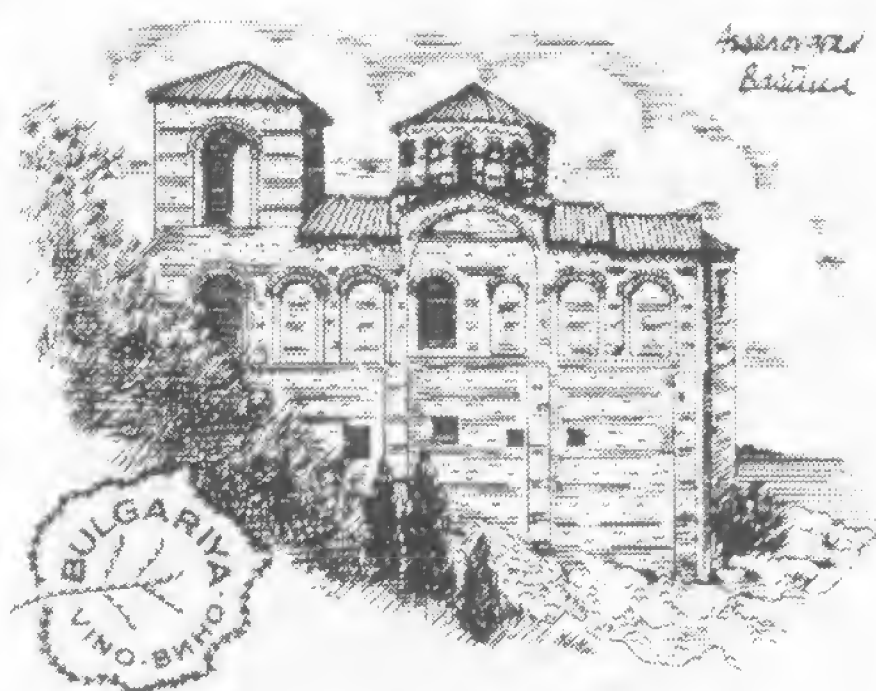
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# Bulgarian Mavrud

1988

ASSENOVGRAD REGION



A fine dry red wine

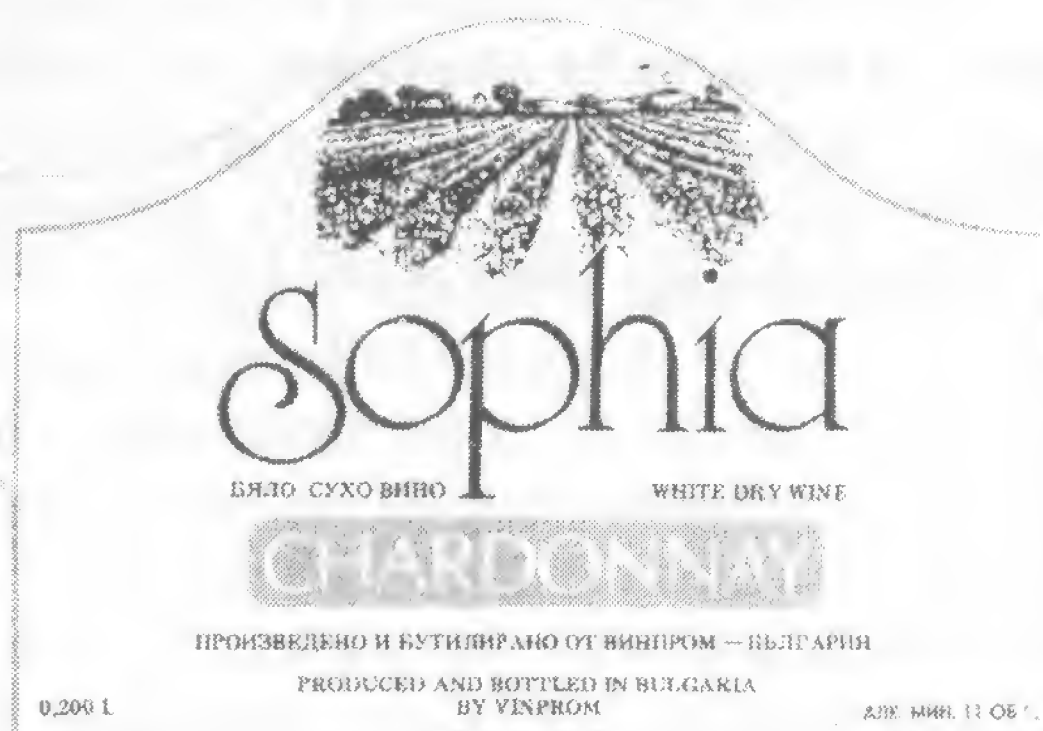
12% vol

Produced and bottled in Bulgaria  
at the Assenovgrad winery

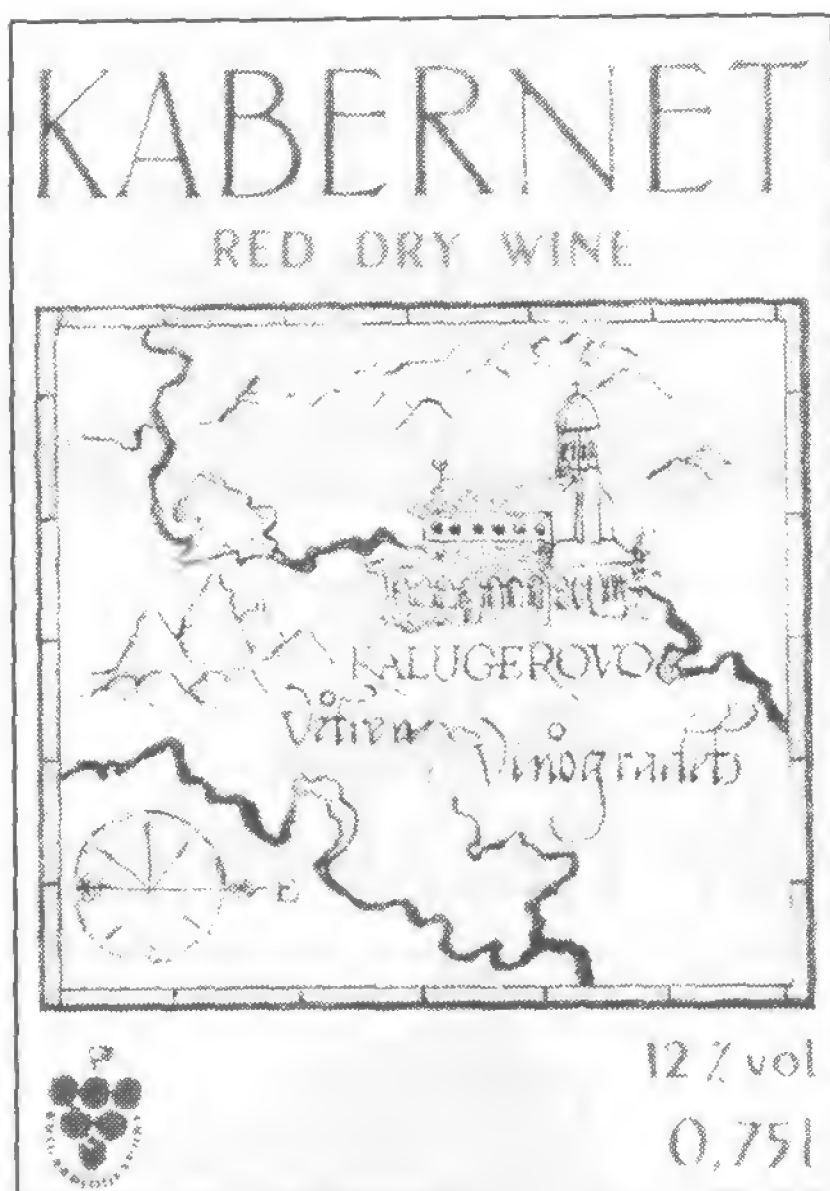
e 750

EXPORTER VINIMPEX - SOFIA, BULGARIA

Turkish domination they were quite primitive and restricted to home production. Huge private wine producers and merchants took the profitable industry in their hands in the period of capitalism and started







the opening of the first wine cellars. Grapes began to be cultivated in co-operative fields, but the output was not very high and the working conditions for the vine-growers were poor. Little technical equipment was used to aid and augment the harvest.



Nowadays, the VINPROM Co. Ltd. is the only one authorised to produce wine and strong alcohol drinks. It comprises about forty large companies, equipped with modern machinery and considerable warehouse areas. The world-famous cellars are Euxinograd, Pavlikeni, Pleven, Rousse, Suhindol, Haskovo, Varna, Pomorie and Lyaskovets.

1982

**ГЪМЗА**

**ОТ ПАВЛИКЕНИ**

ВИНО С КОНТРОЛИРАНО НАИМЕНОВАНИЕ ЗА ПРОИЗХОД  
ПРОИЗВЕДЕНО И БУТИЛИРАНО ПРИ ПРОИЗВОДИТЕЛЯ

PEF. № 0002  
RED DRY WINE  
ESTATE PRODUCED



АЛК. 12.06%  
VIN ROUGE SEC  
EMBOTTLED BY VINIMPEX

0.75L

**GUMZA**

**PAVLIKENI**

CONTROLLED DESIGN

VINPROM PAVLIKENI BULGARIA

EXPORTEUR VINIMPEX

The first vine species domesticated in Bulgaria was Pamid (5th-6th millenium). The Greeks and the Phoenicians brought the first grapevines and planted them. Today the following white wines are produced in Bulgaria: TAMYANKA, MISKET, DIMYAT, RKATSITELI, RIZLING, CHARDEONAY. The red wines include PAMID, GUMZA, MAVRUD, MELNIK CABERNE.

Bulgaria exports wines and grape brandies to over seventy countries and numbers about one thou-

1891

*Château Euxinograd*

# ПИНО ШАРДОНЕ



ПРОИЗВЕДЕНО И БУТИЛИРАНО В ИЗБА  
ЕВКСИНОГРАД

BULGARIE

1983

*Мерло от Сакар*

0.75L

Per № 0008

ВИНО С КОНТРОПИРАНО НАИМЕНОВАНИЕ ЗА ПРОИЗХОД  
ПРОИЗВЕДЕНО И БУТИЛИРАНО ПРИ ПРОИЗВОДИТЕЛЯ

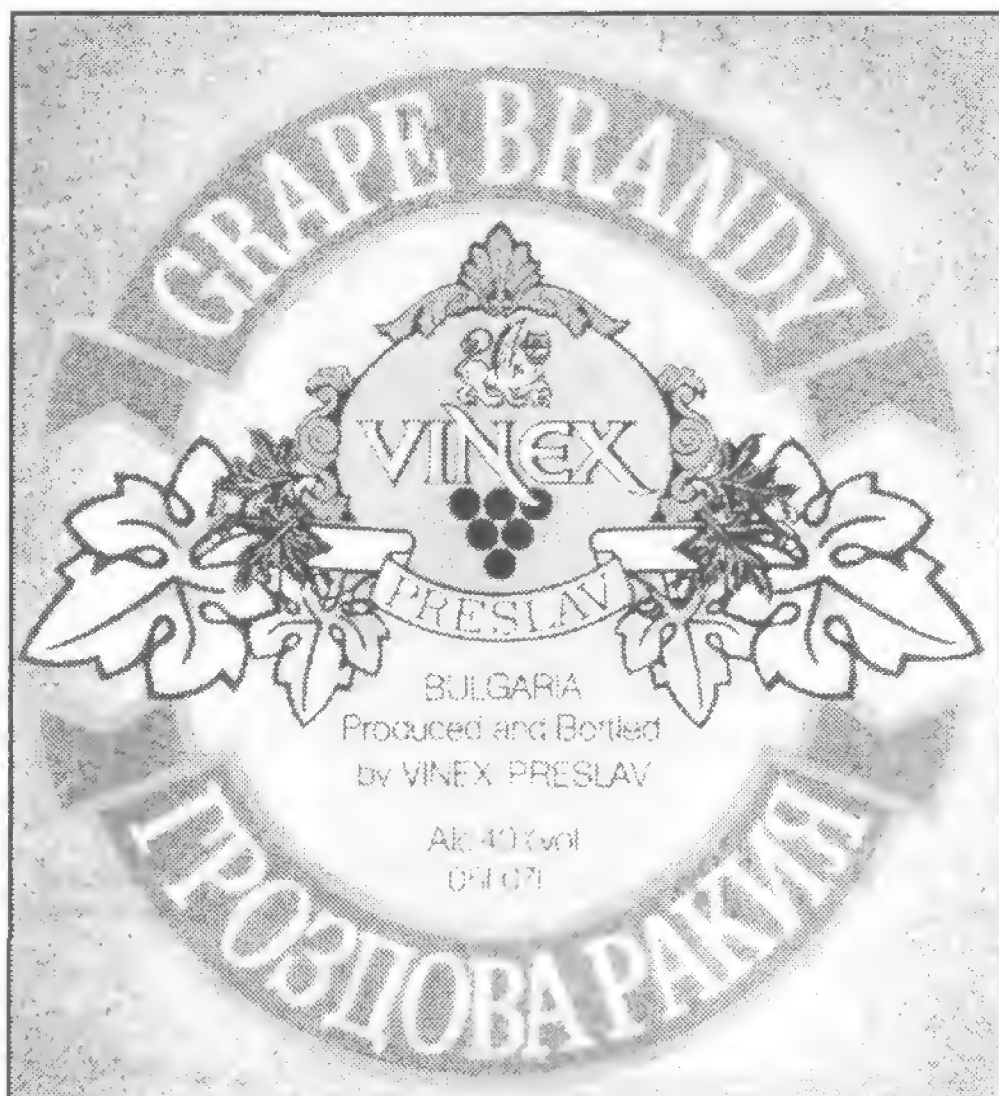
АЛК. 12°

*Merlot ot Sakar*

CONTROLIRAN REGION /ADG/

sand different kinds with certified origin and quality. The variety enables every tourist to find a drink to suit his/her taste.

Foreigners seem to particularly like Mavrud, Melnik, Merlot from Sakar, Merlot from Stambolovo,



Gumza and Novo Cabernet of the red wines and Euxinograd, Misket from Carlovo and Sungurlare, Traminer Khan Krum, Dimyat, Tamyanka, etc. The semi-dry frothy ISKRA both red and white is also worth trying.

Bulgarians drink MASTIKA for aperitif. It is similar to the Greek Ouzo and is prepared with anise and water, is added to taste. The majority of Bulgarians, however, prefer brandy for aperitif which may be grape, plum, apricot or fruit brandy. The most looked for are Euxinograd grape brandy, Pomorie grape brandy, Bourgas Mouskat, Sliven Perla, Bisserna, Troyan and Teteven plum brandies, etc. Bulgaria produces first-class red and white Vermouths called Vinprom, Amaro, Rozari.

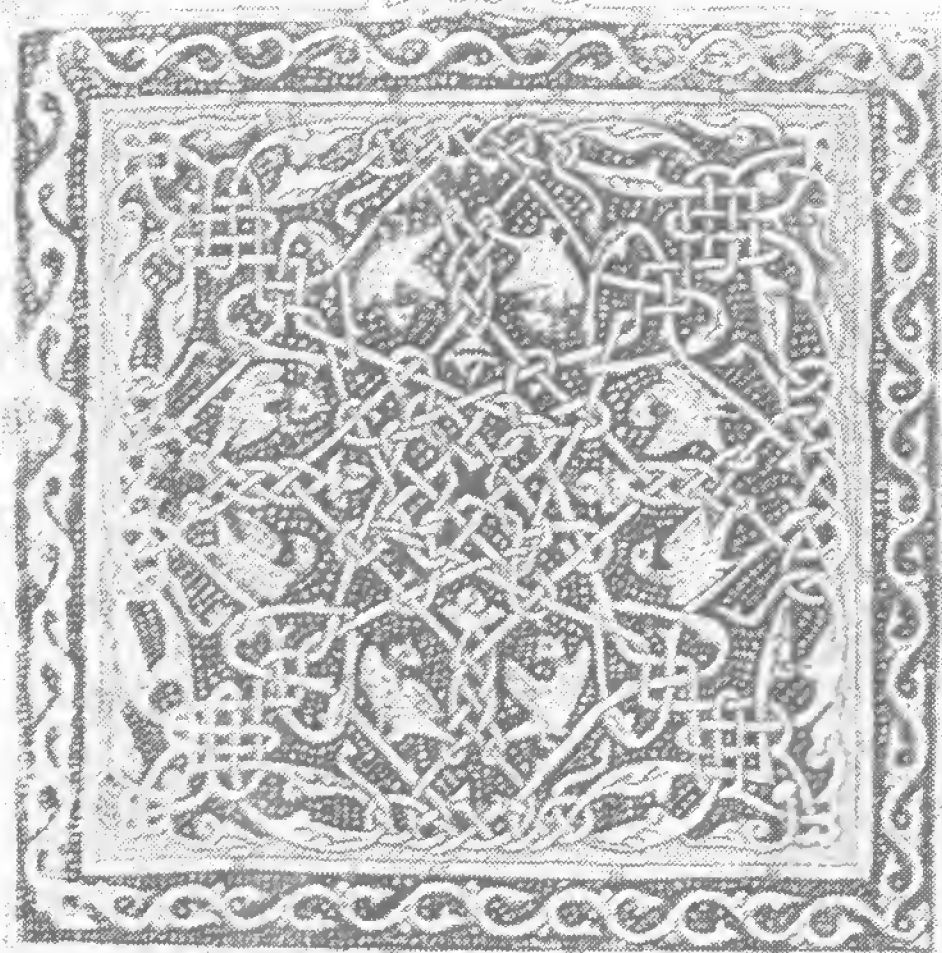
Liqueur from rose, raspberry and peach are among the favourite drinks of Bulgarian ladies.

Bulgarian cognac are known for their fragrance and high quality. Some of the best known brands are Euxinograd, Pliska, Preslav and Pomorie.

When you share a table with Bulgarians before you start drinking, don't forget to say "Nazdrave!" which is the Bulgarian word for "Cheers!"







# СОВЕТСКИЕ

П. П. ОЖИВЛЕНІЕ. ГЛАВА

# НИГРОДСТВА ИХ ВАСИ

ДВА. СНАА ВРАММЛТ

АВИАЦИОННИ СЛАКА ИСА

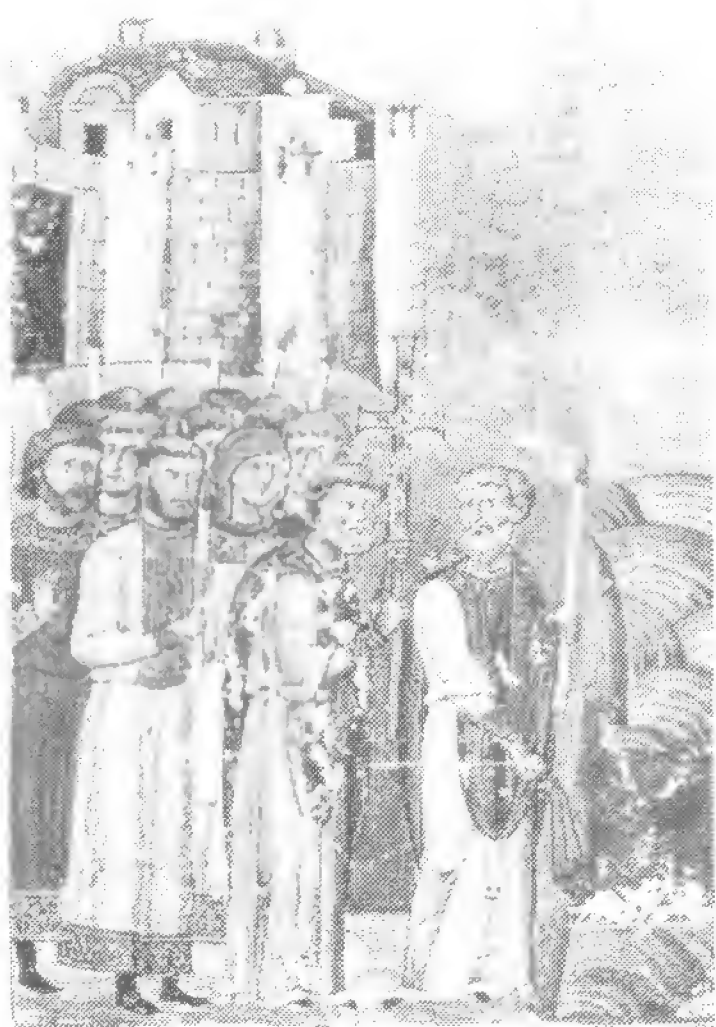
АКЖЕОЛН, ІАКСУВА • ІАКО

КЖЕОДН, ИУЛАНЕАТИА

## THE BULGARIAN LANGUAGE

The Bulgarian language belongs to the group of Slavic languages together with Ukrainian, Russian, Czech, Polish and Serbo-Croatian. The old Bulgarian records date back to 9th-10th centuries and were found in the capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom Preslav. The manuscripts were written by using the alphabet created by the two brothers *Cyril* and *Methodius*. Most of the letters in it had been borrowed by the Greek alphabet and adapted to the Bulgarian language and a few letters were created to designate specific Bulgarian sounds. This alphabet, adopted in the Middle Ages, has been used till the present day with certain changes, of course, which recur in Russian, Serbian and the Orthodox Slavic people as a whole.

The official language is Bulgarian. One can easily learn to read in Bulgarian once he/she has learned to recognise the correspondence between a sound and its graphic sign. Generally pronunciation and phonology do not present the foreign language learner with significant difficulties. Stress and accentuation, however, may become a stumbling block for the foreigners since there are no strict rules as to where to lay the stress in each Bulgarian word.



## BALGARSKA AZBUKA

*The Bulgarian Alphabet*

Caps	Small	Transcript.
А	а	A
Б	б	B
В	в	V
Г	г	G /U/
Д	д	D
Е	е	E
Ж	ж	ZH
З	з	Z
И	и	I
Й	й	П
К	к	K
Л	л	L
М	м	M
Н	н	N
О	о	O
П	п	P
Р	р	R
С	с	S
Т	т	T
У	у	U
Ф	ф	F
Х	х	H
Ц	ц	TS
Ч	ч	CH
Ш	ш	SH
Щ	щ	SHT
Ъ	ъ	u
	ь	
Ю	ю	YU
Я	я	YA

# USEFUL INFORMATION

## LOCAL TIME

GMT +2



Bulgaria adjusts its time for summer and winter on the same dates as the rest of Europe.

## VOLTAGE IN BULGARIA

220 V.



## FUEL



The best Bulgarian petrol, which may sometimes be hard to find, is the 96-octane "Super". Petrol most commonly used is 93-A.

## MONEY



The official monetary unit in Bulgaria is the LEV, which consists of 100 stotinki. The import and export of leva is strictly forbidden. Foreign currency may be freely taken to and from Bulgaria without a declaration form. There are exchange offices in all banks, hotels, border check-points, airports, railway stations, etc.

### **Never exchange money in the street!**

The unspent leva may be re-converted at the Customs and the airport before

leaving the country and on presenting a receipt for it issued by an exchange office.

Travel cheques, Eurocheques and credit cards are accepted in certain banks only as well as in the biggest hotels in the resorts.

## **POST AND TELEPHONE SERVICES**



Postcards, envelopes and stamps are sold in all the hotels, post offices and kiosks. The mailing is not always as fast as can be expected - it takes about a week to reach Europe. Phone calls may be made from the post offices or the hotels.

## **MEDICAL CARE**



The polyclinics are at your service. Emergencies are treated free of charge.

## **OFFICIAL HOLIDAYS**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| January 1st     | - New Year's Day   |
| March 3rd       | - National Holiday: the Liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman yoke |
| April           | - Easter Holidays  |
| May 1st         | - International Day of Labour                                    |
| May 24th        | - Holiday of Slavic Culture and Writing                          |
| Dec. 25th, 26th | - Christmas  |









# TOURIST GUIDE

**BULGARIA** is a sunny rose-fragrant country . It neighbours with Roumania on the north, Turkey and Greece on the south, Serbia and Macedonia on the west and the Black Sea on the east. Although it covers an area of only 110 991 sq km, it has a rich diversity of scenery and landscape, which are so luring for the foreign tourists. It is most attractive with the rare combination of mountains, vineyards, orchards, beaches, balnoeological centres and historical places. **BULGARIA** is renowned for its folklore, arts and sports. A Bulgarian proverb goes like this "*Possess what you can give to the others*". This country possesses so many things it can offer to the others... So, come and explore it! Wherever you go during your stay in this country, you will be impressed by the people's hospitality and cordiality. Good luck!

